the weekly
Standard

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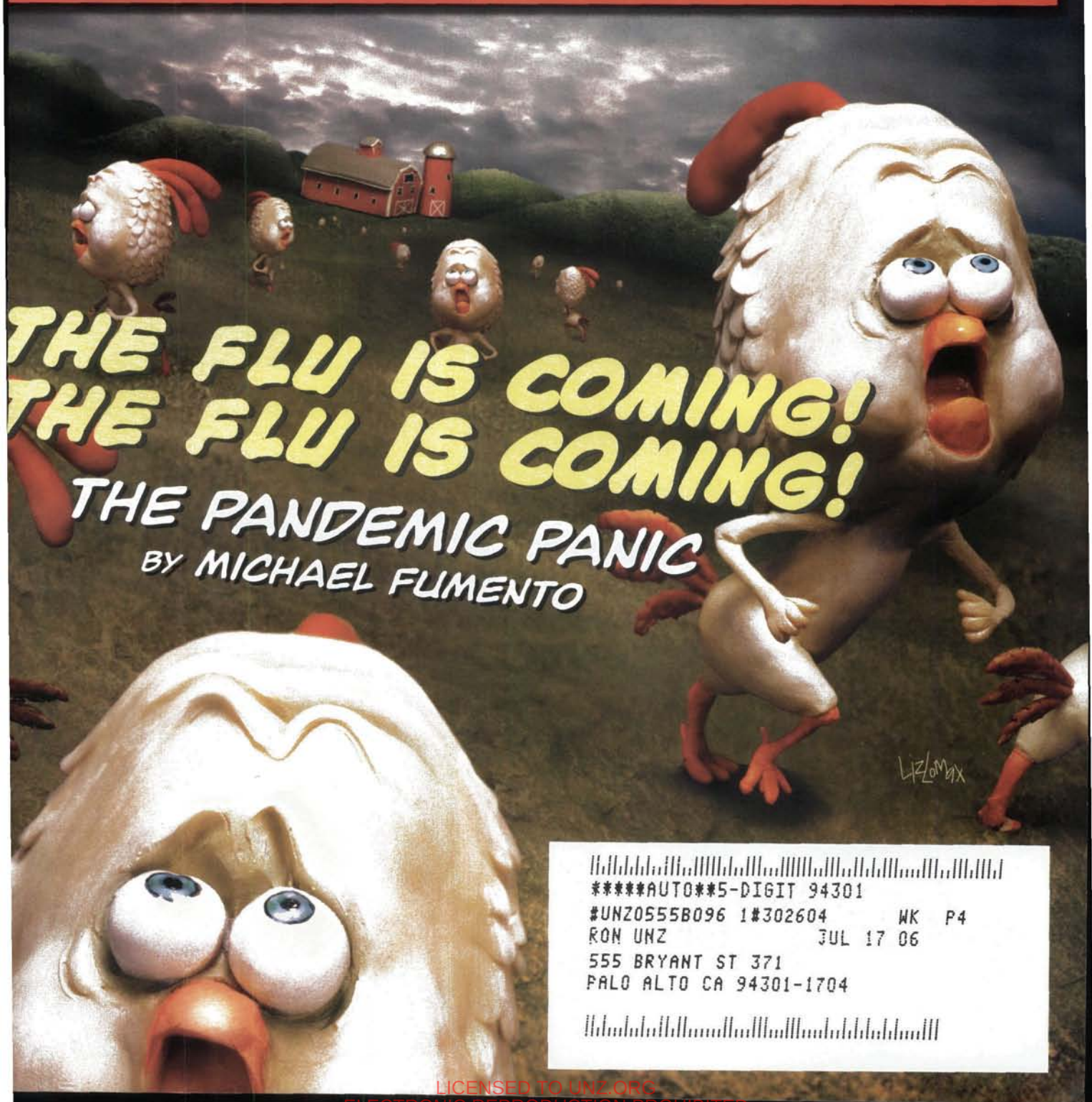
THE REAL LIES ABOUT THE WAR
WILLIAM KRISTOL • STEPHEN F. HAYES



THE FLU IS COMING! THE FLU IS COMING!

THE PANDEMIC PANIC
BY MICHAEL FUMENTO

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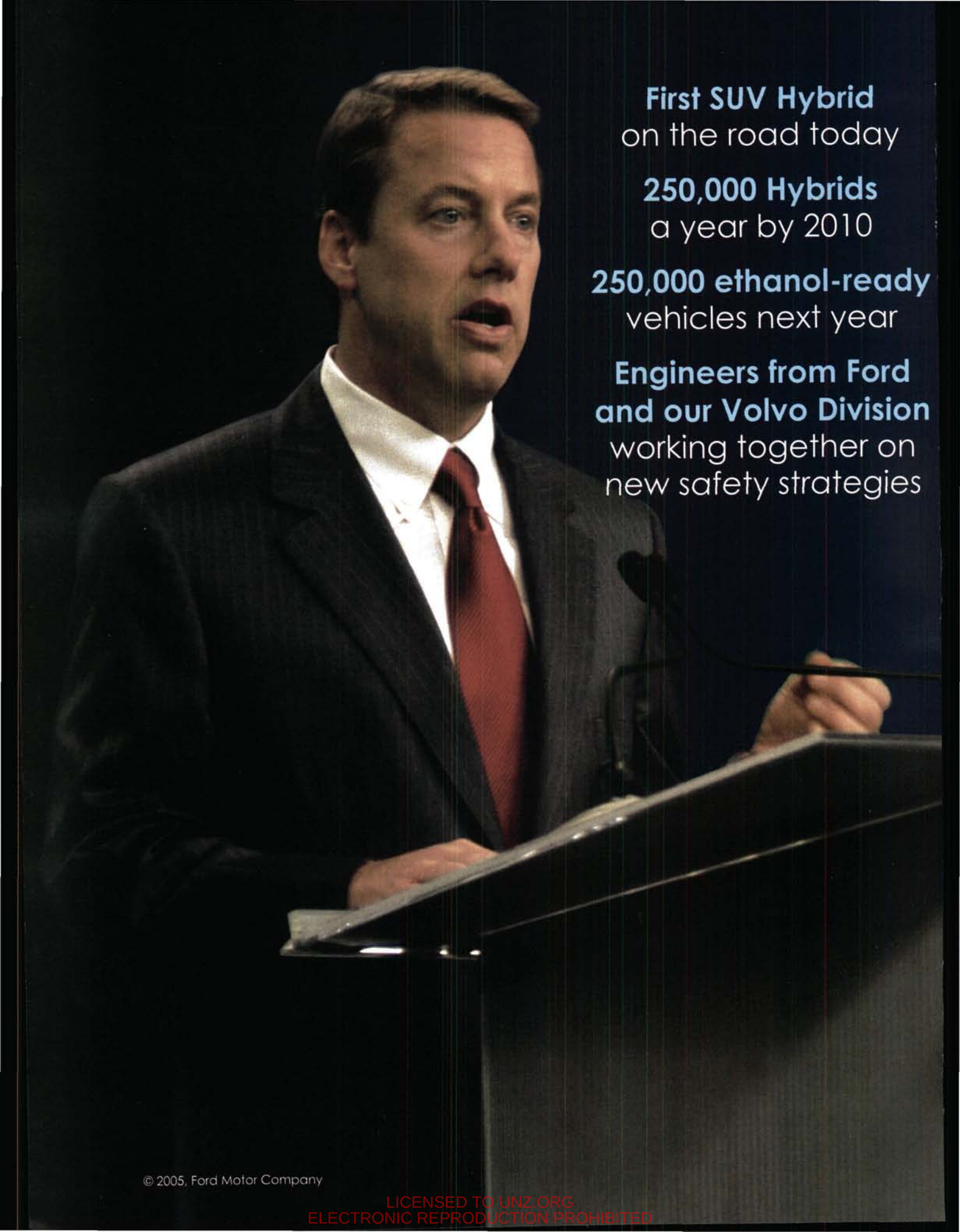

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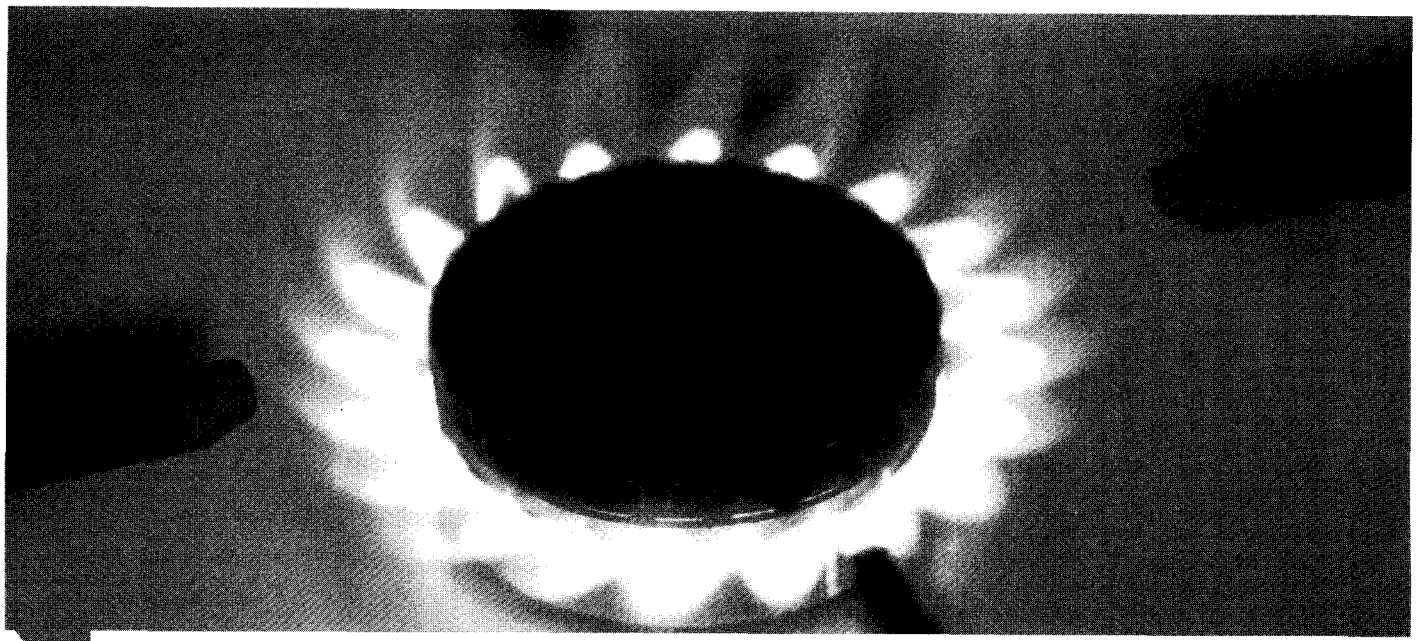

More than 60 million U.S. homes are heated with natural gas, and demand for this clean-burning fuel continues to grow rapidly.

America has enough recoverable natural gas still underground to heat 125 million homes for 120 years.* However, much of it is out of reach, particularly on non-park lands in the West and under the waters off our coasts where access has been prohibited or severely restricted by the government. Congress needs to act now to remove these restrictions.

Natural gas is needed to make products we use daily, including clothing, medicines, computers and plastics. It is used to generate electricity, to make fertilizer and to process our food. Natural gas is used to make light-weight but strong parts that help make cars and planes more fuel efficient. It's an essential energy source for manufacturing iron and steel, making paper products and fueling numerous other industries, big and small.

America's oil and natural gas industry is working around the clock to repair damage from recent hurricanes and to get all natural gas supplies flowing to ensure there is a reliable supply this winter.

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[Thoughts about natural gas]

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A Message From

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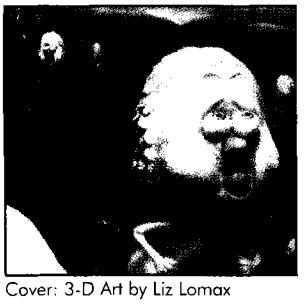

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Joe Klein Strikes Back

We mocked *Time* columnist Joe Klein in this space last week for credulously reporting that the White House had decided to "destroy" Brent Scowcroft (top adviser to Bush's father, and mentor to Secretary of State Condi Rice) because of Scowcroft's complaints about the Iraq war. The basis for Klein's accusation? An unnamed "prominent Republican" who claimed to have received "talking points" on "how to attack" Scowcroft from the White House but who "was so disgusted that [he] deleted the damn e-mail" before reading it. The actual email, we pointed out, was a well-reasoned, and civil, response to Scowcroft's arguments.

Well, Klein wasn't about to take this affront lying down. He emailed an angry rejoinder to THE SCRAPBOOK last week under the cleverly benign heading, "Your Item About My Column." But we weren't fooled. To the contrary, we were disgusted. We sensed a vicious personal attack on THE SCRAPBOOK—in keeping with the scurrilous methods of the Mainstream Media (MSM)—so we deleted the email before reading it, as we do with all our hate mail. But trust us, it was probably unbelievably vile. . . .

Okay, we're joking. We *did* get an email from Klein, but it wasn't really an attack. "Thanks for confirming that the White House did indeed send out a memo disputing Brent Scowcroft's opinions," Klein wrote. "That helps make the larger point of my column, which you neglected to mention: the Bush administration has spent too much energy spinning the war and paid not nearly enough attention to figuring out how to fight an ever-growing insurgency. Perhaps you didn't mention my main argument because you agree with it?"

Umm, no, actually. We didn't mention Klein's "main argument" because it struck us as preposterous and uninteresting, whereas the anecdote about the unread email struck us as preposterous in a different way, and quite interesting to boot. The "main argument," captured in the headline "The Perils of the Permanent Campaign," was not reality-based. There *is* a permanent campaign in Washington—but it's the one launched by George W. Bush's enemies starting with the Florida recount, and relenting only briefly in the six months after 9/11.

We think the insurgency in Iraq, while deadly serious, cannot fairly be depicted as "ever-growing." No, the main thing this page faults the Bush administration for is not spending nearly enough energy countering its critics, thereby allowing them to utter ever more outlandish untruths about the war in Iraq with scandalously little rebuttal. Answering Scowcroft's critique is the sort of thing the White House should be doing more of—and the president should liberate his subordinates to do so publicly, and on a daily basis.

We are amused, we'll admit, at what Klein somehow neglects to mention: Our apparently unanswerable criticism of his source. It's funny how many of the reporters who intone about "the president's unwillingness to admit error" (a Klein phrase) share that trait themselves. ♦

Academic Freedumb

On June 8, 2002, detecting "grave issues of academic freedom and due process" in the case, the American Association of University Professors formally denounced the University of South Florida for taking steps to terminate the employment of a faculty member alleged to be an operative of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. AAUP investigators had "all the information needed" to evaluate the "charges presently articulated and the evidence presently available," the association confidently announced. And none of it amounted to squat: USF computer science professor Sami al-Arian's public statements "fell well within the ambit of academic freedom," and the terrorist connections attributed to him were "too insubstantial to warrant serious consideration as adequate cause for dismissal."

Last week down in Tampa, however, during closing arguments in the martyred professor's federal terrorism-conspiracy trial, even his own attorneys felt obliged to acknowledge, as one of them put it, "that Sami al-Arian had an affiliation with the people in Islamic Jihad." There's "no question about it," co-counsel William Moffitt agreed; his client had "lied" about his involvement with the group for years.

Does *that* fall well within the ambit of academic freedom, one wonders?

Also: Doesn't the AAUP owe the University of South Florida one heck of an apology, already? ♦

Abramoff and Bongo

You can't make this stuff up, alas: In 2003, according to Philip Shenon's November 10 story in the *New York Times*, ex-lobbyist and one-time GOP *wunderkind* Jack Abramoff—who, besides being under indictment in Florida on wire fraud and conspiracy charges, is the subject of ongoing investigations by the Justice Department and the Senate Indian Affairs and Finance committees—

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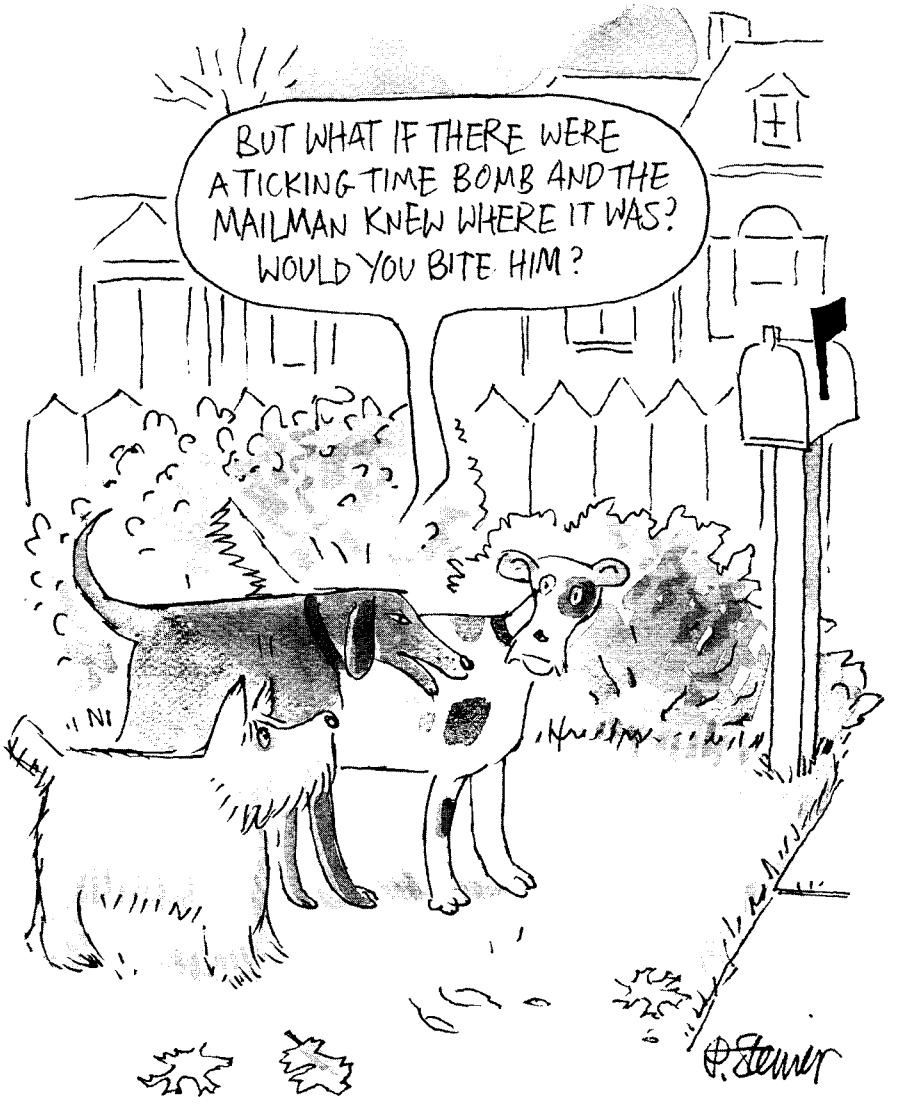

offered to arrange a meeting between President Bush and Omar Bongo, president of the West African nation of Gabon since 1967. Abramoff's price: $9 million.

"Our good friend . . . felt it would be helpful if I were to outline in a letter the current situation relating to the prospects of our working together," Abramoff wrote Bongo in a July 28, 2003, letter released two weeks ago as part of an Indian Affairs Committee document dump. "Our firm"—that would be Greenberg Traurig, where Abramoff worked at the time—"is one of the very top lobbying and public affairs firms in the nation." And "we have a wealth of powerful corporate and government clients." And "our success rate is exceptional." Included with the letter was a draft lobbying contract for the $9 million, which was to be paid, curiously, not to Greenberg Traurig but to Grassroots Interactive, one of Abramoff's many shell companies. Abramoff's closing line: "With high regard and much admiration."

Bongo didn't accept the offer. But the letter got us thinking: What sort of man earns Jack Abramoff's "high regard" and "admiration"?

From the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Gabon edition, circa 2003:

> The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. The Government continued to limit citizens' ability to change their government. Security forces reportedly beat and tortured prisoners and detainees, prison conditions remained harsh, and security forces sometimes violently dispersed demonstrations. Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems. Authorities routinely infringed on privacy rights. The Government continued to restrict freedom of the press and movement. Violence and societal discrimination against women and noncitizen Africans continued to be problems. Forced labor, child labor, and trafficking—particularly in children—remained problems.

It's not all bad, though: According to the State Department report, "there were no political killings during the year." Fine company Abramoff was keeping. ♦

Annals of Neoconservatism

"As that uber-neoconservative Hermann Goering told his trial at Nuremberg: 'Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders.'"

(*New Statesman*, Nov. 14, 2005)

"George W. Bush does not appear in his book. Neoconservatives do: Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) is mentioned a couple of times, and Pat Robertson gets his share of attention."

("Sociologist" Alan Wolfe, reviewing Jimmy Carter's *Our Endangered Values* in the *Washington Post*, Nov. 6, 2005)

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Casual

And the Horse You Rode in on

Like many people, I remember where I was during the exact hour on July 29, 1981, when Prince Charles and Lady Diana were married. I was in bed asleep, proudly uninterested. Only 11 at the time, I'd already fashioned my lifelong foreign policy toward the Royals. It comes in the form of a question, genetically descended from the inchoate murmurings of our recalcitrant ancestors. Our forefathers fought and bled so we could ask it. I paraphrase, but it goes something like this: "Who gives a flying *@!#?"

My countrymen made the mistake of celebrating that union, and we haven't stopped paying for it since. I've deliberately suppressed most of the details of the ensuing decades. Sure, if I apply myself, I seem to recall that Diana lived her life like a candle in the wind. But after that, it's a tabloid blur, enough to make one wonder if people who referred to the fun couple as "nobility" weren't being ironical. Hardly a week went by in which you couldn't pick up a *National Enquirer* and read of the poor doll throwing herself down a flight of stairs, swallowing a fistful of pills, getting called "Squidgy" by a boytoy, or tossing up her bread pudding to get her husband's attention. The saps called her "The People's Princess," but of what masochistic subjects wasn't entirely clear: the United Kingdom of Twelve-Stepistan?

Neither has Charles covered himself in glory. When not shielding his sons from charges of underage drinking and dressing like Nazis, he's a perpetual frontrunner in the sad-sack races, glumly biding his time until his mother croaks. On the rare occasion when he gets caught emoting, it isn't pretty. Who can forget him telling his then-paramour now-wife, Camilla Parker Bowles, that he'd like to be reincarnated as her tampon? I can't, and I've tried. Dear Lord, have I tried.

Charles seems less a fully formed human being than a collection of tics and eccentricities: prattling on about global warming, sustainable living, and showing off his "wibbly wobbly" organic carrots to the BBC. He's become such an Islamo-fetishist that he hangs out in Arabic robes, when not berating Westerners for failing to recognize Islam as a religion of peace (uhhh Charles, the Tube wasn't blown up by a cell of radical Anglicans).

Recently, he told *60 Minutes* that he was most concerned about being thought irrelevant. Wherever would we get that idea? After all, this busy-work-maker is president or patron of over 360 vital organizations, everything from the Border Stick Dressers Association to the National Hedgelaying Society to the Specialist Cheesemakers Association to the British Pteridological Society (celebrate ferns!). His reformed mistress, Camilla, is now following suit, as the proud patron of the Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists. Who's kidding whom? These kids have their fingers on the pulse, which as Camilla's new friends will tell us, can be taken from the dorsalis pedis artery.

Their just-completed eight-day visit to America didn't exactly stack up to Charles's last official visit with his first wife in 1985. Back then, people camped overnight in mall parking lots just to spy Diana visiting JC Penney. And many still speak of her White House-dinner jig with John Travolta as if it ranked alongside the Treaty of Ghent in the history of British-American relations.

We weren't as gracious to Camilla. While our press doesn't know enough equine synonyms to compete with their British counterparts in making "horse-face" jokes, the *New York Post* did christen her the "Frump Tower," while the *Washington Post* said she looked like a "large rectangle." So when I caught the Royals' arrival at a National Building Museum event, I was pleasantly surprised. Charles gave a polite wave, then disappeared through the door, his bald spot bobbing over hang-glider ears (of which, his great-uncle Lord Mountbatten once said, "You'll never be king with ears like that."). But Camilla appears to have been watching the carbs. Her ankles no longer look like suspension-bridge supports, and she's facially welcoming, even if her feathered hair-helmet makes her look like a post-menopausal Bee Gee.

Call me a softy, but I like the old gal. Not only has she followed her heart while absorbing relentless punishment, but she keeps her own counsel, and feels no compulsion to be fashionable or interesting. This last selling point can't be stressed enough. During Diana's reign, Americans paid so much giddy deference to the throne that we could've been mistaken for a nation of schoolgirls, or worse, Canadians. But a recent Gallup poll showed that only 19 percent of Americans cared to meet the new royal couple. To which I say, "Long live Camilla." She may have done more to inspire American independence than King George ever did.

Matt Labash

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Not Entirely Baroque

Kelly Jane Torrance obviously does not listen to Washington, D.C.'s WGMS, which she claims is "pioneering a dumbing-down of classical radio in America" ("Rhapsody in Blue," Nov. 7). The station *does* play entire symphonies and concerti, in the "103 Commercial Free" block in the morning from 9 A.M. to 10:43 A.M. and in the "Dinner at Eight" stretch from 8 P.M. to 9 P.M. In addition, they sometimes play shorter symphonies and concerti after 9 P.M. and on holidays. The station also has an affiliated all-vocal Internet station, at *www.vivalavoce.com*, and has just started podcasting interviews with classical personalities.

Granted, much of the time WGMS plays very short segments of music frequently interrupted by commercials. But they haven't *entirely* sold out.

Martin Morse Wooster
Silver Spring, MD

Trained to Kill

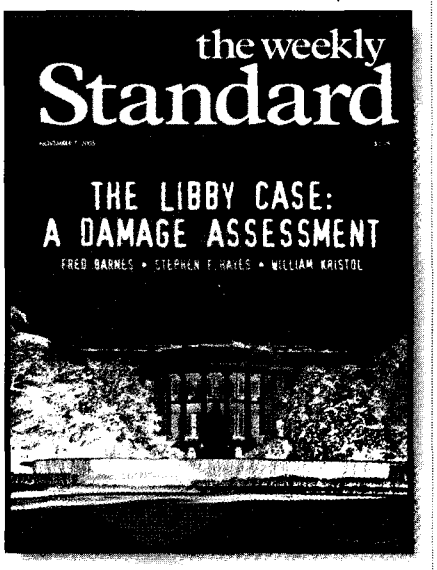
Mackubin Thomas Owens's thoughts regarding the use of our military in domestic service was of great interest, but despite the appropriate headline—"Fighters, Not First Responders" (Oct. 24)—he dealt only superficially with the notion that the military should assist in natural disaster relief efforts. To use a sports analogy, if a man has trained for years to be a heavyweight lifter in the Olympic Games, it would be nonsensical to ask him on short notice to participate in the ping-pong competition.

Lt. Col. Chris Hughes, while serving as commander of the Second Battalion, 327th Infantry of the 101st Airborne, described his Iraq mission in Edwin Black's *Banking on Baghdad*: "Our mission is simple. We are the guys who knock the door down and kill the enemy. We get around the battlefield in Blackhawk helicopters, make contact with the enemy, and kill them. We're the ones." To use such magnificent warriors in any other role than the one for which they have been trained is, or should be, unthinkable.

Ted Kirby
Flat Rock, NC

Get a Life, Losers

Reading Stephen F. Hayes's "Fantasy Life" (Casual, Oct. 10), I was transported once again into the loserdom



within which former dorks-turned-hip professionals finally find their niche in the sports world. When I was between the ages of eight and twelve, my existence revolved around the intoxicating arcana represented by baseball, basketball, and football statistics. My reading was confined to *Sports Illustrated*, *The Sporting News*, and Street and Smith's indispensable guides. Fortunately, I discovered girls, enjoyed my brief time as a high school athlete, and moved on. Though my obsession with sports endured, I could never take diversions like Rotisserie baseball and Fantasy Football seriously—for, as anyone who has played sports at an elite level or who intuitively understands their nuances knows, "not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."

Though I'm reasonably certain Einstein wasn't referring to the inanity and pointlessness of Fantasy Football when he made this remark, I can hardly think of a better context. Of course, growing up in Las Vegas, as I did, my jaundiced view of these Roto-geeks and Fantasy freaks may perhaps stem from the boneheads who, when asked who won the Cowboys-Giants tilt, will dispassionately deadpan "the G-men covered" as though this told you everything you wanted to know. If you must wager on games or athletes, go to the track. They don't call it the "Sport of Kings" because it consists of over-caffeinated MBAs (who as grade-schoolers were unmercifully tattooed with those ubiquitous red rubber balls in P.E.), hunched over their laptops mulling which second-string quarterback to pick up before the trading deadline.

Matthew C. Seaton
Tucson, AZ

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the weekly Standard

Bush Fights Back

On Veterans' Day, the president fought back. In a major speech Friday at Tobyhanna Army Depot in Pennsylvania, President Bush defended the war in Iraq. Most notably, he defended the probity and honesty with which his administration made the case for the war to remove Saddam. At last, the president confronted the slander that he had "lied us into war"—a slander propagated by his opponents with amazing success.

Here is the key passage in Bush's speech:

> While it's perfectly legitimate to criticize my decision or the conduct of the war, it is deeply irresponsible to rewrite the history of how that war began. Some Democrats and antiwar critics are now claiming we manipulated the intelligence and misled the American people about why we went to war. These critics are fully aware that a bipartisan Senate investigation found no evidence of political pressure to change the intelligence community's judgments related to Iraq's weapons programs. They also know that intelligence agencies from around the world agreed with our assessment of Saddam Hussein. They know the United Nations passed more than a dozen resolutions citing his development and possession of weapons of mass destruction. And many of these critics supported my opponent during the last election, who explained his position to support the resolution in the Congress this way: 'When I vote to give the president of the United States the authority to use force, if necessary, to disarm Saddam Hussein, it is because I believe that a deadly arsenal of weapons of mass destruction in his hands is a threat and a grave threat to our security.' That's why more than a hundred Democrats in the House and the Senate, who had access to the same intelligence, voted to support removing Saddam Hussein from power.

And then the president went on offense:

> These baseless attacks send the wrong signal to our troops and to an enemy that is questioning America's will. As our troops fight a ruthless enemy determined to destroy our way of life, they deserve to know that their elected leaders who voted to send them to war continue to stand behind them. Our troops deserve to know that this support will remain firm when the going gets tough. And our troops deserve to know that, whatever our differences in Washington, our will is strong, our nation is united, and we will settle for nothing less than victory.

Bush's counterpunch hit home. Ted Kennedy was upset. He found the speech "deeply regrettable." How dare the president try "to rebuild his own credibility"? How dare the president defend his honor—and the country's? For the nation's honor is at stake, too. If we went to war based on lies told by our president, then it is a disgrace to us all. It is a further disgrace that we reelected him. It is yet a further disgrace that Congress continues to support this war, by appropriating funds for it. It is a disgrace that Senator Kennedy has not moved to have the president impeached.

At least the anti-American left, which wants to get out of Iraq immediately and to impeach the president, is consistent. But Kennedy—and his colleagues like Sen. Harry Reid—do not really want to follow the logic of their accusations. They would rather just damage the president—and the country's foreign policy—and enjoy the political effect.

And the attacks have been working. In last week's *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News survey, 57 percent of Americans endorsed the proposition that the president "deliberately misled people to make the case for war with Iraq," while only 35 percent thought he "gave the most accurate information he had." Five months ago, those numbers were 44 percent "misled" and 47 percent "accurate information." Eight months ago, shortly after Bush's second term began, there were only 41 percent who thought Bush had "misled" them, while 53 percent credited the president with being "accurate." No new information has appeared in those eight months. All that has happened is an unanswered assault by Bush's enemies. The White House figured the election was over and didn't recognize that the anti-Bush campaign would continue.

Now the president and his team seem committed to fighting back. They have the advantage that the facts are on their side. As several commentators have pointed out in this magazine and elsewhere—most recently Norman Podhoretz in the December *Commentary*—the Democratic charge that Bush lied us into war is itself a lie. Lies can work when unrefuted. In a healthy democracy, they tend to boomerang when confronted and exposed. Now Bush has begun to refute the lie. He needs to keep doing so, and also to continue making the positive case for why the war was right and necessary.

If the American people really come to a settled belief that Bush lied us into war, his presidency will be over. He won't have the basic level of trust needed to govern. His initiatives, domestic and foreign, will founder. Support for the war on terror will wane. The lie that Bush lied us into war threatens the Bush presidency in a way no ordinary political charge does. Bush needs to refute it—and to keep on refuting it—for his sake, for the nation's, and for the sake of the truth.

—*William Kristol*

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Where Are the Pentagon Papers?

The administration refuses to defend itself.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

WHEN Senator Carl Levin requested the partial declassification of a Defense Intelligence Agency report in mid-October, the response was swift: He had it in his hands in eight days, reports the *New York Times*.

If only I were a senator.

For two years, I have been working to obtain copies of *unclassified* documents discovered in postwar Iraq. My reasoning is simple: If we understand what the Iraqi regime was doing in the months and years before the war, we will be better able to assess the nature of the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and, perhaps, to better understand the insurgency. It's not a light subject, to be sure.

But the quest for the documents, while frustrating, has also been highly amusing. It is a story of bureaucratic incompetence and strategic incoherence. It is also a story—this one not funny at all—about the failure to explain the Iraq war. Two years after I started my pursuit, I'm not much closer to my goal.

Why? I have been told countless times by officials of the executive branch that there is no need to reargue the case for war, that what matters now is winning on the ground, that our intelligence professionals don't have time to review history, so occupied are they with current intelligence about current threats. I'm sympathetic to at least part of that thinking; it's hard to insist in the face of new and evolving threats that intelligence analysts should spend their precious time evaluating the past.

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So if the intelligence professionals don't have time to analyze the papers left behind by Saddam Hussein's government, why not let the press and private-sector scholars do it?

Besides, in the end, the notion that the Bush administration doesn't need to continue to make the case for war is shortsighted.

Talk to senior American diplomats and military officers in Iraq today and they will tell you that the insurgents closely monitor the debate here in the United States. As domestic support for the war dwindles, the insurgents increasingly believe they can win; they fight harder, they raise more money, they gain new recruits. If these U.S. officials are correct, then continuing to make the case for war in Iraq—to remind people with specifics, not platitudes, why we're fighting—is not a distraction but a central component of fighting to win.

Talk to Sen. John McCain, who urges "a renewed effort to win the homefront," lest we lose sight of this fact: "Success or failure in Iraq is the transcendent issue for our foreign policy and our national security, for now and years to come." Said McCain, speaking at the American Enterprise Institute last week, "A renewed effort at home starts with explaining precisely what is at stake in this war—not to alarm Americans, but so that they see the nature of this struggle for what it is. The president cannot do this alone."

I don't remember when I first heard about the project in Doha, Qatar, but I do remember that I was very interested in learning more about it. The effort, led by Central Command with assistance from the Defense Intelligence Agency, is reviewing the detritus of the former Iraqi regime: videotapes, photographs, and many, many documents. One aspect of the effort is something called "Doc-Ex," short for document exploitation. Several intelligence analysts, together with several dozen translators, most of them from Jordan, are sifting through millions of pages of documents unearthed in Iraq after the toppling of the regime.

It's not an easy job. Some of the documents are forged. Others are hard to read after being damaged by fire, or the water used to extinguish those fires, in the days and weeks after the U.S. invasion. Making the job even more difficult is the fact that many of these documents have come from larger sets of documents that never made it to Doha. We know that the Iraqi regime in the run-up to war systematically destroyed what it considered the most incriminating evidence of its misdeeds. So our analysts are essentially looking at isolated pieces of a much larger puzzle without knowing whether they will ever have the remaining pieces.

The document collection effort in Iraq was haphazard, to say the least. No comprehensive guidance was ever provided to soldiers and intelligence officials on what exactly they should collect. This lack of direction meant that in many cases unit commanders made decisions about what to gather and what to discard. When David Kay ran the Iraq Survey Group searching for weapons of mass destruction, he instructed his team to ignore anything not directly related to the regime's WMD efforts. As a consequence, documents describing the regime's training and financing of terrorists were labeled "No Intelligence Value" and often discarded, according to two sources.

Still, the job in Qatar is daunting. When I spoke to a senior intelligence official last January about the progress being made on the document exploitation project, the official said he hoped all the documents would be "eyeballed"—not translated and evaluated, merely looked at—at least once by August. When I pressed him, saying that timeline seemed unrealistically

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optimistic, he shrugged. "Probably."

It was. According to several officials familiar with the project, analysts and translators are still swimming in documents. They often work in two shifts, day and night, but the total manpower devoted to the project is less than 200 people. There have been discussions about outsourcing the work—perhaps to the Iraq Memory Foundation, formerly affiliated with Harvard University—but no final decision has been made.

I formalized my interest in the project and these documents with a written request to the Pentagon press office in February 2005. I was interested in seeing some of the documents and said I was willing to travel to Doha if necessary. Despite vague promises of help, nothing happened.

Working outside formal Pentagon lines of inquiry, I soon learned more. Many of the documents from Doha had been entered into a database known as HARMONY. HARMONY is a thick stew of reports and findings from a variety of intelligence agencies and military units, and alongside the Iraqi documents were reports from contributing U.S. agencies. Eventually, I got a list of document titles that seemed particularly interesting:

1. Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS) Correspondence to Iraq Embassy in the Philippines and Iraq MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

2. Possible al Qaeda Terror Members in Iraq

3. IIS report on Taliban-Iraq Connections Claims

4. Money Transfers from Iraq to Afghanistan

5. IIS Agent in Bulgaria

6. Iraqi Intel report on Kurdish Activities: Mention of Kurdish Report on al Qaeda—reference to al Qaeda presence in Salman Pak

7. IIS report about the relationship between IIS and the Kurdish Group Jalal Talibani [sic]

8. Iraqi Mukhabarat Structure

9. Locations of Weapons/Ammunition Storage (with map)

10. Iraqi Effort to Cooperate with Saudi Opposition Groups and Individuals

11. Order from Saddam to present $25,000 to Palestinian Suicide Bombers Families

12. IIS reports from Embassy in Paris: Plan to Influence French Stance on U.N. Security Council

13. IIS Importing and Hiding High Tech Computers in Violation of UN

14. IIS request to move persons, documents to private residences

15. Formulas and information about Iraq's Chemical Weapons Agents

16. Denial and Deception of WMD and Killing of POWs

17. 1987 orders by Hussein to use chemical weapons in the Ealisan Basin

18. Ricin research and improvement

19. Personnel file of Saad Mohammad Abd Hammadi al Deliemi

20. Memo from the Arab Liaison Committee: With a list of personnel in need of official documents

21. Fedayeen Saddam Responds to IIS regarding rumors of citizens aiding Afghanistan

22. Document from Uday Hussein regarding Taliban activity

23. Improvised Explosive Devices Plan

24. IIS reports on How French Campaigns are Financed

25. French and German relationships with Iraq

26. IIS reports about Russian Companies—News articles and potential IIS agents

27. IIS plan for 2000 of Europe's Influence of Iraq Strategy

28. IIS plans to infiltrate countries and collect information to help remove sanctions

29. Correspondence from IIS and the stations in Europe

30. Contract for satellite pictures between Russia, France and Iraq: Pictures of Neighboring Countries (Dec. 2002)

31. Chemical Gear for Fedayeen Saddam

32. Memo from the IIS to Hide Information from a U.N. Inspection team (1997)

33. Chemical Agent Purchase Orders (Dec. 2001)

34. Iraq Ministry of Defense Calls for Investigation into why documents related to WMD were found by UN inspection team

35. Correspondence between various Iraq organizations giving instructions to hide chemicals and equipment

36. Correspondence from IIS to MIC regarding information gathered by foreign intelligence satellites on WMD (Dec. 2002)

37. Correspondence from IIS to Iraqi Embassy in Malaysia

38. Cleaning chemical suits and how to hide chemicals

39. IIS plan of what to do during UNSCOM inspections (1996)

40. Secret Meeting with Taliban Group Member and Iraqi Government (Nov. 2000)

There are thousands of similar documents. Most of them are unclassified. That's important: *Most of them are unclassified.*

Because I'd been told that these documents are all unclassified, I requested copies from the Pentagon press office. For reasons I still do not entirely understand, the Pentagon would not provide them. Captain Roxie Merritt, the director of Pentagon press operations, suggested I file a Freedom of Information Act request. I did so on June 19, 2005. Two weeks later I received a letter from the Pentagon's Office of Freedom of Information and Security Review.

> The information you requested is under the cognizance of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). We have referred your request to them at the address provided below requesting they respond directly to you.
>
> Defense Intelligence Agency
> Attn: SVI-1, Room E4-234
> Washington, DC 20340-5100

On July 22, 2005, I emailed Captain Merritt in the Pentagon public affairs office. Captain Merritt was then—and remained throughout the process—gracious and professional. I got the feeling she was being as helpful as the bureaucracy would allow her to be.

She wrote:

> DIA FOIA has confirmed they have

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your request. Here is the challenge as they described it to me.

"This is not a simple request. . . . There are multiple agencies/organizations involved. It isn't as though the documents are laying around in a neat pile waiting for someone to ask for them. The most logical place for the requested documents to be is in a database known as HARMONY. INSCOM (NGIC) is the program manager (owner) of HARMONY, but as they are quick to point out, "anyone" can enter items into the database, so they do not consider themselves the "owner" of the information in the database. Whoever input the information into HARMONY is the release authority of that information and you can't determine who that is until you find the requested documents. For the 44 requested documents, you're talking mega-hours of searching. Of course, the documents may not even be in HARMONY, which would require searching elsewhere (our FOIA folks are looking into that as well). Our FOIA monitor is talking with INSCOM to determine the most efficient way of retrieving the requested documents."

I didn't understand it either.

For weeks I heard nothing. So on August 23, 2005, I emailed Captain Merritt again. She responded quickly.

> Steve,
> Had my folks check. . . . DIA referred the request to Army's INSCOM which does FOIA on behalf of NGIC . . . the owner of HARMONY. I asked if they had advised you of the referral . . . they had not, but will do so.

In early September I received a letter from the DIA.

> This responds to your request under the Freedom of Information Act dated 19 June 2005. Therein you requested from the Department of Defense 43 documents. Your request was referred to the Defense Intelligence Agency on 1 July 2005 and assigned case number 0622-05.

The thrill of having been assigned a DIA case number was short-lived. I learned in the next paragraph that the DIA was no longer handling the request.

> These documents are under the purview of the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command and your request has been forwarded to that organization for processing and direct response to you.

On September 14, 2005, I emailed Captain Merritt and asked for a contact name at INSCOM. She tasked a subordinate to get back to me. That never happened.

Then, two weeks later, I received a letter dated September 20, 2005. It came from the FOIA office of the Army's Intelligence and Security Command at Fort Meade, Maryland. Once again, I had gotten a case number. And once again the case number was meaningless.

> Since additional time is needed to search for records at another element of our command, we are unable to comply with the statutory 20-day time limit in processing your request. Therefore, you may consider this an administrative denial of your request . . .

And so I did.

Some of the document titles I requested are suggestive, others less so. It's possible that the "Document from Uday Hussein regarding Taliban activity" was critical of one or another Taliban policies. But it's equally possible, given Uday's known role as a go-between for the Iraqi regime and al Qaeda, that something more nefarious was afoot.

What was discussed at the "Secret Meeting with Taliban Group Member and Iraqi Government" in November 2000? It could be something innocuous. Maybe not. But it would be nice to know more.

Was there really a contract for satellite pictures among Russia, France, and Iraq in December 2002? That would have been a mere three months before the war, at a time when France was telling the U.S. government it supported "serious consequences" for Iraqi noncompliance with U.N. inspections.

One of the documents, "Iraqi Efforts to Cooperate with Saudi Opposition Groups and Individuals," had been provided to the *New York Times* last summer. Thom Shanker, one of the *Times*'s best reporters, wrote a story based on the document, which was an internal Iraqi Intelligence memo. The Iraqi document revealed that a Sudanese government official met with Uday Hussein and the director of the Iraqi Intelligence Service in 1994 and reported that bin Laden was willing to meet in Sudan. Bin Laden, according to the Iraqi document, was then "approached by our side" after "presidential approval" for the liaison was given. The former head of Iraqi Intelligence Directorate 4 met with bin Laden on February 19, 1995. The document further states that bin Laden "had some reservations about being labeled an Iraqi operative"—a comment that suggests the possibility had been discussed. (According to another Iraqi Intelligence document, authenticated by the DIA and first reported on *60 Minutes*, the regime considered bin Laden an "Iraqi Intelligence asset" as early as 1992, though it's unclear that bin Laden shared this view.)

According to a report in the *Times*, bin Laden requested that Iraq's state-run television network broadcast anti-Saudi propaganda; the document indicates that the Iraqis agreed to do this. The al Qaeda leader also proposed "joint operations against foreign forces" in Saudi Arabia. There is no Iraqi response provided in the documents. When bin Laden left Sudan for Afghanistan in May 1996, the Iraqis sought "other channels through which to handle the relationship, in light of his current location." The IIS memo directs that "cooperation between the two organizations should be allowed to develop freely through discussion and agreement."

What kind of cooperation resulted from this discussion and agreement?

You'd think the U.S. government, journalists, and policy types—not to mention attentive citizens—would want to know more. You'd think they'd be eager. ♦

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The Revolt of the Exurbs

In which reliable Republican counties went Democratic. BY FRED BARNES

IN 2004, THE NEW HOTBED of Republican voters was the outer suburbs, the so-called exurbs on the distant outskirts of a central city, packed with tract housing, strip malls, chain stores, a megachurch or two, and thousands and thousands of middle class and lower middle class families. President Bush romped in the exurbs. He won 97 of the 100 fastest-growing counties in America—most of them exurbs—and piled up a 1.72 million vote advantage over John Kerry.

From the governor's election in Virginia last week, there's a bit of evidence that the Republican grip on the exurbs may be loosening. Jerry Kilgore, the Republican candidate for governor, lost Loudoun and Prince William counties, exurbs that Bush won handily last year and that Republican Mark Earley, who lost the governor's race in 2001, won by a wide margin.

The evidence of a serious falloff is not overwhelming, for sure. The two counties are unique in that they're on the fringe of Washington, D.C., and thus voters may have been influenced by national trends and the floundering of President Bush and congressional Republicans. Moreover, these voters may have been affected by the coverage of the governor's campaign in the *Washington Post*, which was highly favorable to the Democratic candidate, Tim Kaine, and hostile to Kilgore.

Still, the outcome in Loudoun and Prince William should be alarming to Republicans. Located west of Washington, Loudoun is the second fastest-growing county in the country. Kilgore lost Loudoun by 51 percent to 46 percent. A year earlier, Bush did 10 points better, and in 2001 Earley's vote topped Kilgore's by seven points. The numbers in Prince William, south of Washington, were slightly better. Kilgore was defeated by 50 percent to 48 percent, slipping five points below Bush and four below Earley.

So what's the cause of the dip? It's largely a matter of guesswork. Ken Mehlman, the Republican national chairman, thinks independent voters, deciding at the last minute, went with "how they felt things were going." And since polls show a large majority of Americans believe the country is headed in the wrong direction, they voted for the opposition party's candidate, Kaine. They turned with the political wind.

Maybe, but I think there are two better explanations for the Republican retreat in the two exurban counties. First, there's the immigration issue. Late in the campaign, Kilgore played up his opposition to government aid for illegal immigrants. He did so in TV ads and speeches, criticizing Kaine for supporting taxpayer-financed services for illegals and their families. The tagline in his TV spots was: "What part of 'illegal' does Tim Kaine not understand?"

The question is not whether Kilgore was indulging in blatant immigrant-bashing. He wasn't. The question is whether his emphasis on illegals might have been seen as unfriendly to immigrants, especially by the large immigrant communities in the two counties. An exit poll might have answered this question, but none was conducted.

Nevertheless, Republican consultant Jeffrey Bell insists the immigrant issue hurt Kilgore. Attacks on immigration work in theory but often not in practice. Bell says criticizing illegal immigrants has backfired in every campaign he's familiar with that emphasized the issue. Indeed, the Kilgore campaign was slipping in the polls late in the campaign when he was highlighting the immigrant issue.

"They overplayed the immigrant issue," says Mark Rozell, professor of public policy at George Mason University in northern Virginia. "They may have caused a counter-mobilization by people who were offended by the ads."

Rozell says he was "stunned" when he heard a Kilgore radio ad on illegal immigrants on a classical music station in Washington. "Is that the demographic their ads were supposed to appeal to?" he says. In all likelihood, Rozell says, the ads appealed only to Republicans already committed to vote for Kilgore.

The second explanation is that voters in Loudoun and Prince William have turned against rapid development. Having settled in for a few years, residents have become irritated by traffic congestion and other problems associated with growth. The main thoroughfare in Prince William, for example, I-95, is one of the most clogged interstate highways in America.

This is merely a theory, of course. But it is buttressed by the fact that Kaine aired a television commercial embracing slow growth in the closing days of the campaign—during the same period he soared past Kilgore. I doubt this was a coincidence.

The pivotal political role of the exurbs was described by Ronald Brownstein and Richard Rainey of the *Los Angeles Times* after the 2004 presidential election. "In states like Ohio, Minnesota, and Virginia, Republican strength in these outer

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suburbs is offsetting Democratic gains over the last decade in the more established—and often more affluent—inner-tier suburbs," they concluded. Kaine, the Democrat, won the three close-in suburbs of Washington—Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax—with over 60 percent of the vote.

Loudoun and Prince William were not as vote-rich for Bush last year as many other exurbs. Of the 100 fastest-growing counties, according to Brownstein and Rainey, "Bush took 70 percent or more of the vote in 40 of them and 60 percent or more in 70 of them. In all, Bush won 63 percent of the votes in these 100 counties."

So Loudoun and Prince William aren't quite typical in yet another way: They're not landslide Republican counties. But the fact that Kilgore fell far short of the president's showing in the two Virginia exurbs is bound to be a matter of concern to Republicans as they focus on 2006 and 2008. ♦

A Continent of Broken Windows

How do you say 'asphalt jungle' in French?

BY GERARD ALEXANDER

RIOTERS IN FRANCE have torched thousands of cars, injured scores of police, burned and shattered dozens of buildings, and killed at least one person. Not knowing what to make of it all, Americans may be forgiven if they file this away as an event that has nothing to do with normal life in France in particular and Europe in general. After all, U.S. media coverage routinely portrays Western Europe as a much more civil place than America. But that stereotype is badly out of date. Granted, riots like these are unusual, but they are taking place amidst rising crime that has left many European countries more uncivil than we often think, much more dangerous than in the past, and in important ways more crime-ridden than the United States. Europeans are now saddled with a crime problem that has been building for years and isn't disappearing anytime soon—alongside their high unemployment, slower growth, and social strains that were evident long before the recent round of rioting.

European crime rates have been converging with U.S. rates for years and have now overtaken them in several categories. This is partly the result of the decline in U.S. crime rates since the start of the 1990s, a decline that has taken rates below the levels that once kept Dirty Harry busy at home and gave America a violent reputation abroad. But the real story is relentlessly rising crime in Europe. Any serious report has to say from the start that the headline crime of homicide remains rarer in Western Europe than in the United States. But most other crimes have reached distressing levels across the continent. However dicey it is to use cross-national crime statistics, several major trends are clear.

An impressive rise in theft, robbery, and burglary began in several European countries in the late 1950s and accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s. By the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the rates at which English, Swedes, French, Italians, Spaniards, and Dutch reported being victims of nonviolent crimes was in the same neighborhood as American rates. These crimes, and violent ones as well, kept climbing into the 1990s. By the end of that decade, when the United States was finally getting a handle on its problem and U.S. rates were heading downward, European crime stabilized at its new, high rates. Some countries, like Britain and Denmark, have since managed to nudge several categories of crime downward through expanded and improved police efforts. But the crimes they proved best at containing were often not violent crimes. Worse, violent crime continued to rise sharply into the early 2000s in France, Spain, and the Netherlands.

The latest figures, scattered from 2000 to 2005, suggest that more assaults are committed per capita in England than in America, while Swedes, Norwegians, and Dutch experience roughly the same assault rates as Americans. Robberies (which involve force or the threat of force) are as common in England and the Netherlands as in the United States. Theft rates have surged ahead of the United States in Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, and Norway. Separately, auto thefts are now a European specialty, with Scandinavians, Brits, French, and Italians worse off than Americans. And the U.S. burglary rate is now lower than those in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and Britain.

Data from some European cities make the change even more dramatic. Robbery and burglary rates in British cities like Nottingham and Manchester exceed New York City's. In 2004, charming Copenhagen reported five times New York's theft rate, two and a half times its auto thefts, and over four times its burglaries. Moreover, some European cities suffer certain crimes that Americans don't know at all. As the *New York Times* understatedly observed, the French government was slow to respond to the recent riots "in part because the initial

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SIPA / Bordas

French riot policemen in Toulouse, November 9

nights of unrest did not seem particularly unusual in a country where an average of more than 80 cars a day were set on fire this year even before" the riots began.

America is even losing its distinctiveness among the advanced industrial countries when it comes to murder, as European homicide rates edge upward. Twenty and thirty years ago, Europeans experienced a tiny fraction of U.S. murder rates, and individual murders were still shocking. By 2001, though, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Vienna, and Brussels were suffering 40 percent or more the homicide rate that New York City has today. For that matter, Finland has fully half the U.S. murder rate nationwide. Now, 40 percent isn't 100 percent. But it's a far cry from stereotypes of European civility.

Especially urban Europeans now routinely live in fear of being attacked or robbed, just as Americans did in past decades. This shows up both in opinion surveys and in the many costly measures Europeans now take to secure their homes, cars, and personal safety. Burglar alarms adorn quaint houses on cobblestoned streets. High crime also means that most European populations now contain a class of people who routinely engage in theft and low-grade violence. Europeans often insist that these criminals are either East Europeans who have arrived since 1990 or come from communities of immigrants mainly from North (but also sub-Saharan) Africa. But while immigrants and their children may be in the mix, the "new" crime started so long ago and is so widespread that it's clear Europe has also generated a homegrown class of people who see other members of their own societies as marks.

France's riots probably cannot be understood without reference to a welfare state so expensive that it stifles job-creation and closes the doors of social advancement to young people, especially minorities. The official French unemployment rate has fluctuated between 8 percent and 12 percent for almost 25 years straight (even more joblessness is concealed by early-retirement schemes). Ironically, Europeans used to lecture Americans that expensive welfare states at least ensured social peace by preventing the rise of an alienated underclass of the kind seen in American inner cities. Higher taxes for lower crime was a tradeoff many Europeans were prepared to make. Now they find themselves saddled with both high welfare costs *and* high crime. But placing blame on the welfare state only gets us so far, because crime is also high in the Netherlands and Scandinavia, where unemployment is lower thanks to serious reforms of their welfare states.

The only silver lining is that Europe's high crime rate may yet play something like the role it did in the political and intellectual turn that America took in the 1970s. Crime helped force America's first neoconservatives and neoliberals to confront questions of social order,

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civic virtue, and moral standards, questions that usually don't come up in debates over taxes and spending. Amidst the rioting, Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin remarked, "What is in question today is the effectiveness of our model of integration," meaning France's approach to "social cohesion." De Villepin believes social cohesion comes from government and its subsidies. Crime does of course raise some financial issues. But, if anything, property crimes reflect the something-for-nothing mentality that welfare states already inculcate and legitimize. And crime as a political issue is freighted with moral significance, involving, as it does, a rejection of the mores needed for *any* ordered society. In this country, the rising crime rates of the 1960s and 70s eventually brought a renewed appreciation, among liberals and conservatives, for the indispensability of certain social mores, like minimal respect for character, national traditions, and virtuous individuals. Crime helped many Americans remember how important it is that mores like these be instilled in society's members, especially its newest and youngest ones.

President Jacques Chirac and his cabinet have been busy condemning violence and demanding respect for the authority of the state. But everyone, including the rioters, knows these words are being uttered against a backdrop of decades of excuse-making, the bigotry of low expectations, and the brushing aside of those who wanted to enforce minimal standards of social comportment, especially on immigrants and their children. Across Europe, the public arena has been stripped of civic standards, with the watery exception of "tolerance." Still awaiting its Rudy Giuliani, Europe is a continent of broken windows, in which government leaders and intellectuals don't defend or repair civic values under assault. The experience of New York City suggests it's never too late to start. Maybe Europeans, too, will be mugged by reality. ♦

My Friend Maury

Maurice Rosenfield, 1914-2005

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

IN THE SUMMER OF 1988, I had a phone call from a man who identified himself as Maurice Rosenfield. He claimed he had been reading me in magazines for years, said that he had an option on F. Scott Fitzgerald's story "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," and asked if I would mind reading a manuscript he had commissioned in which an Englishman attempted to turn the story into a musical. "Sure," I said, "send it."

After I read it, I told him the manuscript seemed hopeless. He agreed but said that he was glad to have me confirm his instincts. Would I, he wondered, like to attempt the job? I was to think about it. And might he take me to lunch so that he might thank me in person?

Writers are fantasts, and the notion of writing a successful musical was fodder for a grander fantasy than I am generally accustomed to indulge. "We saw Joe Epstein's *Diamond* in London." "Really? We saw it New York, and then again in Chicago. The New York cast was better." Gold rained down upon me, in this fantasy, normally cold maitres d' smiled and bowed as I entered their outrageously expensive restaurants. In the shower I worked on the lyrics for the show's big song, but all I could come up with in the way of rhymes for Ritz was blitz, kibbitz, and a chauffeur named Fritz. I dropped the idea.

When a few weeks later I met Maury Rosenfield for lunch, he turned out to be a large man, handsome, well turned out, in his mid-seventies but full of energy, and with no crap about him. I liked him straightaway. We met at his posh country club, the Lakeshore, whose membership was once strictly limited to German Jews. When I told him that the story was that the only Jewish event celebrated at this club in the old days was *Kristallnacht*, he roared with laughter. He had a great laugh, Maury.

He also, as I was slowly to learn over the next eighteen years, had a great life. We had attended the same Chicago high school, and we had both gone to the University of Chicago. He went on to law school there, graduating at the top of his class; he didn't tell me this—he had no brag to him—I learned it from his son Andy.

He had a successful legal practice, one both lucrative and important. He specialized in First Amendment cases—at different times he defended Lenny Bruce and *Playboy* magazine—and in 1941 wrote an important article, "The Contemporary Function of the Class Suit," that is said to have paved the way for class-action lawsuits.

The law apparently wasn't enough to hold his wide interest and abundant energy. Ben Hecht, the Chicago journalist and later playwright and screenwriter, set Maury on a case to free a falsely convicted (for murder) black man who was languishing in Joliet prison for fifteen years. Maury took the case to the Supreme Court, where the conviction was reversed. Hecht next convinced him to go in partners on a movie about the case, but he died before it got off the ground.

Maury and his wife Loie were enormous appreciators of talent in all its forms. He was large and earnest, she small and witty. (Note to casting director: As a couple, imagine them as a Jewish version of Joel

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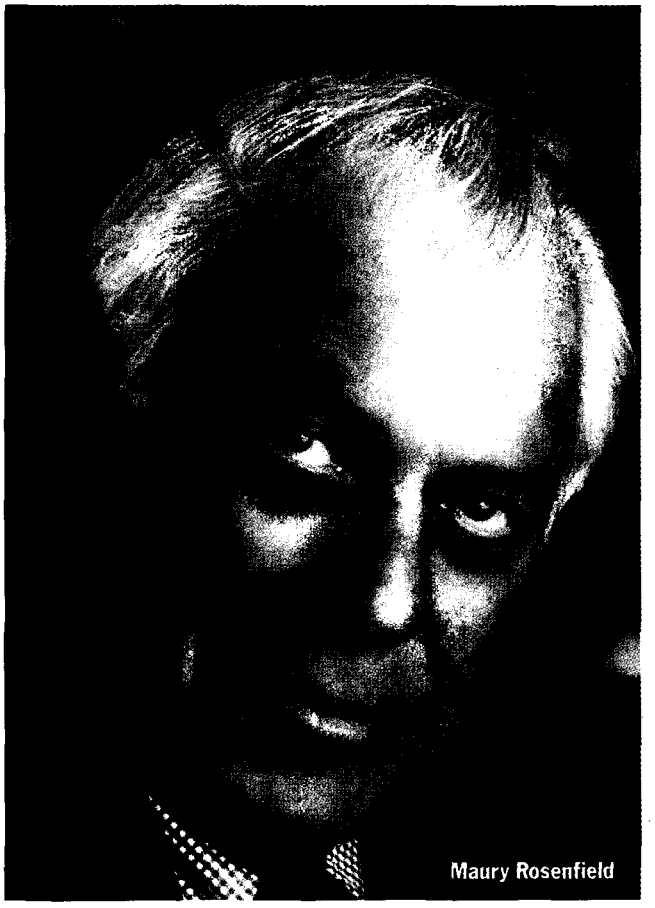
McCrae and Barbara Stanwyck.) Together they decided to do a different movie. As independent producers, they made *Bang the Drum Slowly*, a baseball film that introduced Robert DeNiro, who signed on for the now piddling sum of $10,000, in one of the starring roles. Maury himself was drafted to play the team's owner; someone who looked prosperous and authoritative was required—he filled the bill. A lovely flick, *Bang the Drum Slowly*, and whenever I told people that my friends the Rosenfields made it they would reply by saying how much they adored that movie.

The toughest thing about producing a movie, Maury once told me, was serving the cast and crew lunch. They complained so much during the shooting of *Bang the Drum Slowly*, he said, that he went across town, where *The Godfather* was being shot, and hired the caterer working on that movie. Henceforth, when anyone complained about the food, Maury would tell them to knock it off, they were eating the same damn lunch that Marlon Brando was eating. The Rosenfields never made another movie, though they did produce plays, among them *Barnum* (in which Glenn Close had her first leading role) and *Singing in the Rain* (which used Twyla Tharp as choreographer) and a revival of *The Glass Menagerie* with Jessica Tandy.

Maury lived off and for ideas. In politics, as a younger man, he was among the small but effective crew at the University of Chicago who worked to secure the 1952 Democratic presidential nomination for Adlai Stevenson; later he became a devotee of free markets, an admirer of Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman and Aaron Director, who began the economics in law movement. He attended Mont Pelerin Society meetings. He loved stories about the stringent critical spirit of the University of Chicago Economics Department. He told me that he heard George Stigler, one of Chicago's Nobel Prize economists, say that Gary Becker, another Nobel Prize winner, might just be the greatest economist of the twentieth century, then add, "Of course it hasn't been a particularly good century for economics."


Maury Rosenfield

He was full of opinions. He thought Casey Stengel the great genius among baseball managers, and could back it up by introducing all the innovations Stengel had brought to the game. He held heretical opinions about Israel. His son reported that, when they came out of Elton John's rather shoddy remake of *Aida*, he asked his father what he thought of it: "A bit pro-Nubian," Maury said.

Maury made you wonder what was the point of experience without coming to a judgment about what one had experienced. He had opinions on movies, ballplayers, politicians, ideas, and he always asked you your opinion.

The nice thing, though, was that if you differed with Maury, he did not cast you into hell. He was argumentative without being at all mean. To slow up his admiration for free markets, I used to tell him how poorly they worked when it came to culture. "Look," I would say, "at television." He conceded that I might have a point. Maury took the pejorative out of the word "opinionated"; he made having passionate opinions seem a perfectly sensible reaction to life.

For a man of strong opinions, he kept an equally strong sense of humor. I recently told him that I had met a few wise Jews but no serene ones; serenity had nothing to do with being Jewish. He thought for a moment, then laughed and said, "That's very amusing, and I think it's true." He was a man who could add on and take off thirty or so pounds, and during one of his heavier phases, when his daughter-in-law, thinking to buy him a belt for his birthday, inquired of his wife Maury's waist size, she answered, "Equator." Maury, not Loie, told me that story.

Maury once told me that, when still a young man, he decided that he wished to be wealthy and anonymous. An interesting set of ambitions, both of which he achieved. The first of them is easily enough understood. But why anonymity? I'm not certain, except that I know Maury to have been a man who wanted in on the action, as he was both in law and in the arts, but, somehow, he didn't need any of the attention that came with fame.

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The death of his wife, two and a half years ago, was easily the greatest sadness of Maury's life. It halved his existence. And then, soon after, owing to unsuccessful knee surgery, he lost the easy use of his legs, and his life was diminished yet again. The philosopher George Santayana says that "the world is so ordered that we must, in a material sense, lose everything we have and love, one thing after another, until we ourselves close our eyes."

Saddened though Maury was by his serious losses, he was a long way from being ready to close his eyes, even though he had achieved the age of ninety. He kept in the game; he continued to stay engaged with life. The Rosenfield family were long-lived, and my sense is that Maury was hoping for another four or five years in which to watch his grandchildren set full sail upon life. Although his death was, as modern deaths go, an easeful one—his weakened heart closing down, over and out, all in less than a minute—and though his life was nothing like the joyous thing it was when he had Loie with him, I know he wanted still more of it. He wasn't ready to give up.

In my last phone conversation with Maury, which took place the Friday before the Sunday night on which he died, we talked about the World Series—a lifelong Cubs fan, he was nonetheless a fierce critic of the team's manager, Dusty Baker, who drove him into the camp of the White Sox—about the meaning of the withdrawal of the Harriet Miers nomination to the Supreme Court, about recent movies, about his concerns in connection with possibly having further surgery, and then, perhaps twenty or so minutes into our conversation, he noted, from a CNN crawl, that Dick Cheney's chief of staff, Scooter Libby, had been indicted. He said that he thought he ought to break away, but would get back to me if he heard anything of interest in this. I never heard from him again. I am going to miss him, a lot. ♦

Ahmadinejad Bombs

The president of Iran versus the diplomats of Iran.

BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

THE NEW PRESIDENT of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, may unintentionally have helped undermine clerical rule in the country with his recent outrageous speeches and remarks against Israel.

Ahmadinejad's scandalous comments came on an Iranian holiday instituted by Ayatollah Khomeini at the end of the Muslim month of Ramadan and known as Jerusalem Day; it is intended to agitate Iranian Muslims against the Jewish state and the Zionist concept. This year it fell on October 26. A former Revolutionary Guard who had already stirred new global anxieties about the Iranian theocracy by his intractable promotion of the country's nuclear ambitions, Ahmadinejad used the opportunity to declare that Israel "must be wiped off the map," as fulfillment of the official Iranian vision of "a world without Zionism."

Suddenly, many Iranians felt they had been thrown a quarter of a century backward, to the worst excesses of Khomeini's rule. A United Nations Security Council resolution was almost immediately passed, condemning Ahmadinejad's rhetoric. The Israeli government called on the U.N. to expel Iran. Western governments—but also Iranian and other Shiite Muslims—began expressing their disgust with Tehran.

Not only that, but opposition to Ahmadinejad's posturing was expressed by the most vulnerable sector of the Iranian state itself, the diplomatic corps. Like Saudi Arabia and various Latin American tyrannies, Iran in recent years has often sent potential dissenters and "reformers" abroad as ambassadors. This has the dual advantage of removing individuals who might oppose the government's whims and presenting an ameliorative image of the Iranian power structure to a justly suspicious world.

Already, numerous Iranian diplomats had expressed concern about Ahmadinejad at the time of his election in June. Some of them had described the new chief executive as an uneducated, bumptious, immature, and rather stupid individual who can only reflect badly on Iranians. Notwithstanding the indignities to which they have been subjected by the governing clerics over the past 26 years, Iranians feel pride in their ancient culture and a profound desire for the world's respect, and they are embarrassed and repelled by so primitive a presidential style.

The first indication of the current rift between Ahmadinejad and the ambassadors came several weeks *before* the president's threats to Israel, when the official Islamic Republic News Agency announced that Javad Zarif, Iranian ambassador to the United Nations and head of the country's nuclear negotiating team, had resigned from the latter post. Zarif is a cosmopolitan individual with a reputation for moderation and a professed commitment to reform. Some Shiite Muslims close to the Iranians predicted that Ambassador Zarif would soon leave his U.N. post as well, but sources in Tehran say Ahmadinejad and others have beseeched him to stay. Rumors began to circulate that Iranian diplomats would resign en masse.

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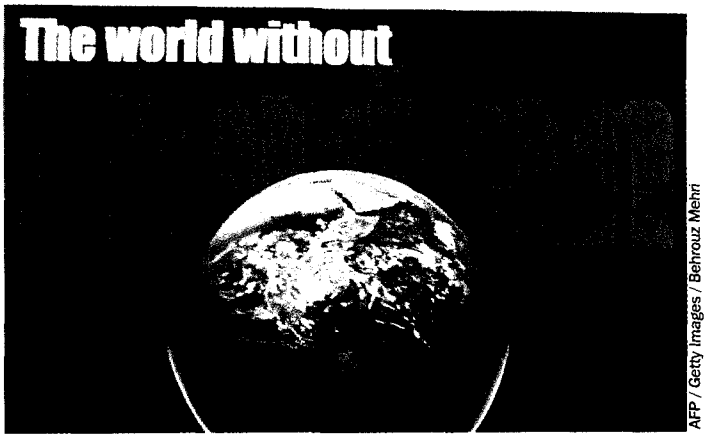
Ahmadinejad beat them to the punch. Soon after he repeated his diatribe against the Jewish state, four leading Iranian ambassadors were removed from their jobs: ambassador to France Sadegh Kharrazi (whose brother, Foreign Minister Kemal Kharrazi, had resigned after Ahmadinejad was elected), who comes from a clerical family that cannot be touched by reprisals; Shamsedin Khaghani in Germany; Hossein Adeli in Britain; and Mohammed Alborzi in Switzerland. Germany and Britain had gone furthest to sanitize Iran's image in Europe, with trade relations as their argument, but they had also expressed firm opposition to Tehran's acquiring nuclear weapons or, in the British case, interfering in Iraq.

Ahmadinejad's purge was widened to comprise a roster of 40 ambassadors and other senior diplomats by the end of October (although their assignments will officially end next March). The dismissed expressed frustration that they had not gone ahead and quit as a group. Others who anticipate the same fate insist privately that they will resign rather than let the Iranian authorities fire them, reiterating their distaste for serving the new president.

Meanwhile, top officials in Tehran, as well as some diplomats, tried to soften the impact of Ahmadinejad's belligerent comments. Some claimed that Iran would accept a peace process supported by Palestinians, and that Iran wants peace, not war. But this is not credible, given the absence of accountability in a theocracy that allows no alternation in power of competing political parties. Ahmadinejad's predecessor, Mohammed Khatami, who prides himself on his international reputation as a reformist, went so far as to equate the new president's ideological outlook with "fascist values and principles in the name of Islam," which Khatami said were unacceptable.

Muslim leaders and intellectuals outside Iran also began protesting. Ali Alyami, an intrepid Saudi dissident in Washington, stated that his Center for Democracy and Human Rights in Saudi Arabia rejects "the repulsive call by the extremist Iranian president to annihilate a whole people from the surface of the earth," and exhorted "all Arab and Muslim governments, the decent Iranian people, and all people to condemn this deadly dissemination of hate." Alyami's observation that "the 60 million Iranian people deserve better representatives" was echoed by Saudi Shia dissidents prominent in the West.



AFP / Getty Images / Behrouz Mehri

Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, October 26, 2005

Also in the United States, Shiite community activist Nawab Agha of the American Muslim Congress unequivocally repudiated Ahmadinejad. Among Albanians, the only European Muslim community with an important Shiite component, the government of Kosovo supported the U.N.'s anti-Iran resolution. Pakistani journalist Husain Haqqani, a Sunni Muslim affiliated with the Hudson Institute, commented, "The Iranian president's call for wiping Israel off the map comes at a time when governments of several Muslim countries are considering recognition of Israel. Mr. Ahmadinejad is clearly trying to fuel hatred. . . . The legacy of hatred against Israel and its people is immoral and contrary to the universal humanitarian principles that Islam also invokes."

Touchingly, a 29-year-old Iranian woman student at a Budapest university, whose name was not released, was reported to have written to the Israeli embassy in Hungary to offer her apologies for Ahmadinejad's gross comments.

Predicting Iranian outcomes is an unproductive endeavor. But it is clear that the majority of Iranians do not want to continue living as they are, and it may be that the clerics can no longer rule as they have. There is certainly no harm in hoping this to be the case, and in encouraging Iranian diplomats and other responsible personnel to defect and unburden themselves of their involvement with this hateful regime. ♦

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Defining Medals Down

The Presidential Medal of Freedom ain't what it used to be. BY PHILIP TERZIAN

THE Presidential Medal of Freedom, "the nation's highest civilian award," was established by Harry Truman in 1945 to recognize notable service in World War II. Eighteen years later, John F. Kennedy, prompted by White House aide Daniel Patrick Moynihan, decided to revive the moribund honor by awarding it to people of distinction—and not just U.S. citizens—who might otherwise remain unrecognized by the American government.

The first class of recipients was supposed to get its medals on the Fourth of July, 1963, but for one reason or another, the White House ceremony was repeatedly postponed. By the time it was finally scheduled to occur, on December 6, Kennedy had been assassinated, and the nation was still officially in mourning. His successor, Lyndon Johnson, however, recognized an opportunity. In a solemn, not to say tragic, atmosphere, LBJ went ahead with the event, bestowing the medal on a long, distinguished, gray-haired line of worthies.

"The president of the United States," declared the master of ceremonies, Under Secretary of State George Ball, "is expressing the appreciation of a great nation for the extraordinary achievements of a remarkable group of men and women, achievements spanning a wide spectrum of human endeavor: the arts, science, diplomacy, government, the humanities, the law, and philanthropy."

Johnson had decided to award the medal posthumously to Kennedy, and while the citation was being read, his widow sat nearby, hidden from view by a curtain in the State Dining Room. When the medal was handed to Kennedy's brother, Robert, Jacqueline Kennedy stood up and left the White House, not to return for years.

I have a theory about the 216-year-old American republic, which suggests that human nature is such that we have gradually developed certain social institutions any history-minded European would recognize: elite schools and universities, dynastic political families, orders of chivalry, and the like. When the Medal of Freedom was revived 42 years ago, it was celebrated as an American equivalent of the British civil honors list: an award, in the gift of our democratic monarch, for services to the state—loosely defined, of course.

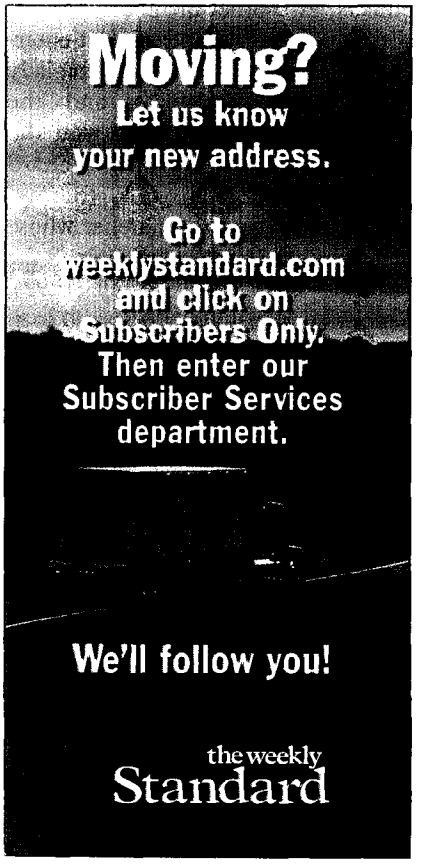
No one surveying the 1963 list would argue against any of the recipients. It included the recently deceased Pope John XXIII, America's preeminent man of letters (Edmund Wilson), brilliant musicians (Pablo Casals, Marian Anderson, Rudolf Serkin), writers (Thornton Wilder, E.B. White), artists (Andrew Wyeth, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Edward Steichen), educators (James Conant, Alexander Meiklejohn), scientists (John Enders, Edwin Land), statesmen of the law (Felix Frankfurter), and statesmen (John McCloy, Jean Monnet, Robert Lovett, Ralph Bunche, Herbert Lehman).

Compare that particular crowd, however, with the happy recipients last week in the White House. There were Carol Burnett, Jack Nicklaus, Paul Harvey, Muhammad Ali, Andy Griffith, Frank Robinson, and Aretha Franklin. All delightful people, of course, and accomplished in their way; but in the same category as Edmund Wilson, Rudolf Serkin, and Felix Frankfurter?

To be sure, there were a handful of plausible honorees this year: Robert Conquest, the great historian of the Soviet Union, Alan Greenspan, retiring chairman of the Federal Reserve, and Vinton Cerf and Robert Kahn, the men who designed the software code for transmitting data on the Internet. But mixed as they were with the sheriff of Mayberry and the manager of the Washington Nationals, there is no escaping the fact that honors inflation has affected the value of the Medal of Freedom.

It's difficult to identify the turning point, but an alphabetical list of recipients provides a clue: There we find NASCAR king Richard Petty (1992) between the ornithologist Roger Tory Peterson (1980) and writer/editor Norman Podhoretz (2004). In recent decades may be found Louis L'Amour (1984), Walter Cronkite (1981), Mr.

Philip Terzian is Books & Arts editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



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Rogers (2002), Peggy Charren (1995), Lucille Ball (1989), Frank Sinatra (1985), and Dave Thomas of Wendy's (2003).

Of course, as with any prize sweepstakes, there are interesting lapses. As far as the presidents of the United States have been concerned, Carl Sandburg (1964) was an extraordinary achiever in poetry, but W.H. Auden, Robert Lowell, and James Merrill were not. Dorothy Height (1994) is a remarkable figure in the civil rights movement, but Bayard Rustin didn't make the cut. Herblock (1994) was an artist of whom a great nation can be proud, but not Robert Motherwell. The endeavors of novelist James A. Michener (1977) were worthy of recognition, but not those of John Updike.

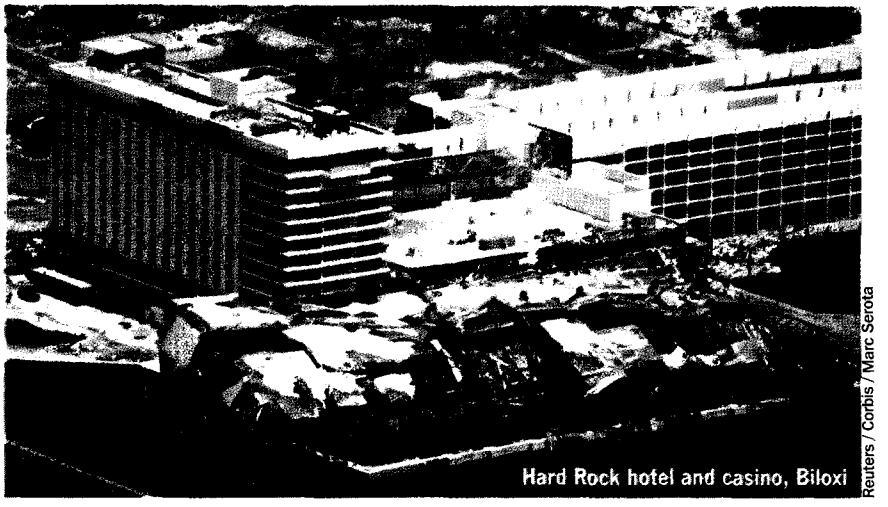
Consider the list chronologically, and a pattern emerges. Instead of rare recognition presented at the end of a distinguished career, the Presidential Medal of Freedom has become a routine award—a White House gold watch, a secular knighthood—for retiring politicians, senior military officers, ex-cabinet members, personalities in the news, and popular entertainers. Every president and first lady between the Kennedys and the George H.W. Bushes have won the medal, and this year Gen. Richard Myers, former Rep. G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery, and the hotelier whose saga inspired *Hotel Rwanda* joined the ranks of Gen. John Vessey (1992), Sen. Mike Mansfield (1989), and Joan Ganz Cooney (1995) of the Children's Television Workshop.

Perhaps, as our republic evolves, we would be wise to adopt the British system of graduated honors: certain awards for civil servants, valiant policemen, and champion cricketers, more exalted distinctions for eminent novelists and prime ministers. In that way Robert Conquest wouldn't have to make small talk at the White House with Carol Burnett. Yet even in Conquest's Britain, which has the benefit of experience, the system has been (shall we say) distorted, too—as Ringo Starr, MBE, and Sir Elton John can attest. ♦

Hitting the Jackpot in Washington

The Katrina casino bailout.

BY JOSEPH LINDSLEY



Hard Rock hotel and casino, Biloxi

Reuters / Corbis / Marc Serota

KATRINA STILL RAGES metaphorically, and this time she's battering Capitol Hill in the form of budget struggles over everything from entitlement programs to casinos. Members of Congress, aided by lobbyists, are duking it out over what to cut and how to spend, in the face of already bloated federal spending and the needs of hurricane victims. One sticking point: the Bush administration's plan to offer unprecedented tax breaks to Mississippi's 13 profitable off-shore casinos.

The tax breaks are part of Bush's proposed Gulf Opportunity Zone, which would create tax incentives, grants, and regulatory relief for working-class homeowners and small businesses. But the decision to include Mississippi's damaged casinos in the "GO Zone" boils the blood of anti-gambling activists. Traditionally, federal tax incentive plans have excluded casinos, along with tanning salons, massage parlors, and country clubs. Besides, say House conservatives, there is no need to offer enticements to an industry that is already rebuilding under its own steam and that didn't originally ask for help, although it's having second thoughts.

The industry lobby, the American Gaming Association, wants its share of aid. The association correctly reports that the state of Mississippi "loses $500,000 in revenue each day the Gulf Coast casinos are not operational." Both gaming proponents and those state lawmakers who only grudgingly tolerate casinos agree that casino tax revenue is important for state and local coffers. Mississippi banked $334 million last year from its 12 percent tax on gambling, so it's hurting now. In September, after Katrina, the state gleaned $16 million from casinos, down from nearly $25 million in the same month in 2004. September's casino tax take, the lowest since February 1996, came entirely from the state's Mississippi

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riverboat casinos not devastated by the hurricane.

So should Congress extend federal tax incentives to help revive this source of revenue? Mississippi governor Haley Barbour supports the Bush administration's plan. It would offer casinos a 50 percent deduction for investment in infrastructure and equipment. The casinos reportedly want more: Lately, some have asked for tax breaks for the wages they have been extending to employees since their operations were destroyed.

But Mississippi's gambling taxes are already the third lowest in the nation. What's more, national gambling firms are wealthy enough to make large donations to Katrina relief. MGM Mirage, for example, the corporate parent of Biloxi's Beau Rivage casino, pledged $1 million plus unlimited employee matching. Do such companies really need federal incentives to rebuild?

Most of the Mississippi casinos are run by nationwide firms with considerable capital. Leading companies such as Harrah's even see Katrina as an opportunity. Since the hurricane, Mississippi has adopted a friendlier siting policy, allowing casinos, which previously were kept offshore, to be built on land, within 800 feet of the water. As a result, some operators are planning to build more elaborate hotel and gambling complexes, which likely will produce bigger profits than before. They will also boost the stricken economies of Biloxi and Gulfport by providing even more than the 17,000 casino jobs available before Katrina. But the parent companies of the damaged casinos planned to do all this before talk of tax incentives began. Already, three of the Biloxi/Gulfport casinos plan to reopen by January 1, although others won't reopen for months, and the state gaming commission will soon consider a proposal for a new casino in Biloxi.

To critics, it seems obvious that casinos ought to be a source of money for rebuilding, rather than beneficiaries of relief. Moreover, while they're not contributing tax revenue to local coffers, what do casinos offer but vice, crime, and misery for the families of those ensnared by the bright lights of the slot machines? Rep. Frank Wolf, a Virginia Republican and longtime gambling opponent, is incredulous at the Bush proposal: "We're having to cut programs, but we're going to be giving the gambling industry subsidies to rebuild when they all have insurance? They're all going to rebuild anyway!"

On October 12, Wolf and 64 other members of Congress signed a letter to President Bush asking him to reconsider tax breaks for the gambling industry. So far, however, the administration plans to forge ahead with its plan, assuming Congress passes it.

While some casino owners admit they need no incentives to rebuild, the American Gaming Association insists its members should be treated just like any other business. AGA president Frank J. Fahrenkopf Jr. argues in a statement responding to Wolf's campaign that tax breaks will speed the return to work of casino employees, aiding not just those workers but also businesses that rely on gamblers' patronage (though a number of small local bars say their business has increased dramatically now that the casinos are temporarily shuttered).

Something else that rankles Wolf: The inclusion of the casinos in the Gulf Opportunity Zone proposal nearly went unnoticed in Congress. "With the lobbyists here in town, it's 12:30 at night, the vote is taken, and all of a sudden you wake up, and three days later you read the bill and find out that the gambling industry has been subsidized," he complains. If a hurricane-prone state wants to permit gambling but force it offshore, as Mississippi did, that's its business; but why should Washington award tax breaks to casinos shipwrecked during the inevitable summer storms? ♦

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Fuss and Feathers

Pandemic panic over the avian flu

By Michael Fumento

"The indication is that we will see a return of the 1918 flu virus that is the most virulent form of flu," warns America's top health official. "In 1918, half a million people died. The projections are that this virus will kill one million Americans . . . "

A quotation ripped from today's papers about an impending "bird flu" pandemic? No, the year was 1976 and the prediction of a deadly "swine flu" overshot the mark by 999,999 deaths (although dozens did die from the vaccine campaign). That's something to remember amid the current alarms. Another is that we've been here before with the identical virus over which the feathers are now flying, avian influenza type H5N1, which first hit poultry flocks in 1997. "Race to Prevent World Epidemic of Lethal 'Bird Flu,'" and "Hong Kong 'Bird Flu' Could be the Next Big Outbreak," blared the headlines then. The world death toll from that "wave"? Six. And let's not forget the outbreak of SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) two years ago, which led to 750 stories in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*—one per death worldwide, as it turned out. The 71 U.S. cases of SARS, which resulted in zero deaths, did not "Overwhelm U.S. Health System," as CNN had predicted.

None of which is to say there won't be another flu pandemic. There were three in the last century, after all. But that gives us absolutely no idea when the next will come, nor whether it will be any relative of H5N1, nor what its impact will be. Two of those 20th-century pandemics weren't particularly severe, while the other was catastrophic. (Pandemic, by the way, does not mean "deadly epidemic"—it means "worldwide epidemic.")

What we can say with confidence is that there is never such a thing as helpful hysteria. And the line between informing the public and starting a panic is being crossed every day now by politicians, public health officials, and journalists.

Michael Fumento is a nationally syndicated columnist with the Scripps Howard News Service and a senior fellow at Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C.

Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have been handling numerous fearful phone calls from the public and the media, fielding questions about the safety of bird feeders and Thanksgiving turkeys. "It's been insane," spokesman Dave Daigle told MSNBC. In a recent Q&A session with Wendy Orent, science writer and author of the book *Plague*, a Nashville resident asked why "don't we just kill off all the domestic birds and poison the food on the migratory bird routes?"

Headlines like "Flu Pandemic Could Kill 150 Million, U.N. Warns" (Reuters) certainly haven't helped. Never mind that the figure was tossed off by a single official who provided a range of "5 million to 150 million." (Translation: "We haven't the foggiest.") Similarly, the media have generally morphed the federal government's leaked estimate of 200,000 to 1.9 million deaths to simply "1.9 million deaths." Also not helping is the media propensity to seek out the most alarmist "experts."

High on the list of scaremongers is Laurie Garrett, former *Newsday* reporter and now a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. Garrett is to pandemics what Paul Ehrlich is to population growth, having amassed fame and fortune by being consistently and spectacularly wrong. Just as he became famous predicting a *Population Bomb* that fizzled, she came to prominence through a 1995 book, *The Coming Plague*. No, it hasn't come yet, but—trust her—it will. Garrett's rise began with her prediction of an Ebola virus pandemic. This was notwithstanding the fact that Ebola is just about last on any realistic list of possible pandemic pathogens, since it's terribly difficult to transmit. But guess who won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Ebola coverage? Lessons like this aren't lost on other journalists.

Then there's University of Minnesota School of Public Health professor Michael Osterholm, who has spent the last several years trying desperately to outdo Garrett. He came up with a worldwide avian flu death toll estimate of 180-360 million simply by extrapolating the estimated death toll from the Spanish flu of 1918-19 to today's world population.

But the winner in this grim game of one-upmanship is Dr. Irwin Redlener, director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University, who

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claimed on ABC News's *Primetime* on September 15, "We could have a billion people dying worldwide."

When I later questioned him on this figure, he rather sheepishly admitted he meant to say "one billion *ill*." Quite a faux pas. But Garrett and Osterholm were on the same show, and neither made a peep to correct the misstatement. ABC used it as part of the introduction. "It could kill a billion people worldwide, make ghost towns out of parts of major cities, and there is not enough medicine to fight it," declared the somber voiceover. "It is called the avian flu." So the billion figure is out there and, no, this single article won't succeed in pulling it back.

Yet the more serious the potential threat, the less excuse there is for running around like infected chickens with our heads cut off. If we do face a pandemic flu in the coming months or years, there are numerous actions we can take that will save an enormous number of lives, and some of the most important you probably haven't even heard about because they don't work as melodrama.

Let's break the pandemic issue down to its simpler parts, namely: How likely is avian flu to become readily communicable between humans? How contagious would it be? What interventions could be taken if it did become pandemic? How deadly would it be?

But first, How exactly does "avian" flu differ from "normal" flu? Every year several strains of flu circulate around the globe, usually reaching U.S. shores in late October and infecting 5 to 20 percent of the population. Flu leads to the death of about 36,000 Americans in an average year. To reduce the level of illness and death, we vaccinate. Unfortunately, flu mutates rapidly, so the antigens on the virus's protein coat change each year. This is known as "antigenic shift" and explains why we need to get new vaccines every fall—the protective antibodies we received from last year's vaccination were designed for last year's antigens. Health authorities tell us the white lie that there is no carry-over immunity from being vaccinated or infected the previous year; but actually there is some.

Nevertheless, if there were a radical "antigenic shift," the annual vaccine would be worthless. We would then suffer another pandemic such as the Asian flu of 1957-58 that caused about 70,000 U.S. deaths and a million globally, the Hong Kong flu of 1968-69 that caused 34,000 U.S. deaths and 1-4 million globally, and the big daddy of all modern pandemics, the Spanish flu of 1918-19, that killed more than half a million Americans and about 25-50 million worldwide. (It should be noted that some experts, such as Dr. Edwin Kilbourne, emeritus professor of immunology at New York Medical College, believe avian flu is closely enough related to flus to which we've already been exposed that we would have *some* natural protection.)

Lots of animals get influenza, and it often jumps from species to species. Sometimes we give it to them, and other times they give it to us. That's the worry with avian flus. They were first recognized in Italy over a century ago, but the current epidemic of H5N1 among birds wasn't discovered until 1997 in Hong Kong, when it began killing chickens and then spread to humans, six of whom died. (This prompted the first panic.)

Poultry vaccines are available, and international bodies encourage their use, but compliance has varied tremendously. Vietnam appears to be making a heroic effort to inoculate all of its poultry, and other countries might follow suit, but vaccinations cost money, and the U.N. claims the West isn't forking over big enough premiums for an avian flu insurance policy. Once a flock is infected, nothing can be done but to slaughter every bird. In the meantime, migratory birds can carry it to another part of the country, or even to other continents, as we've recently seen.

As of November 9, 125 cases and 64 deaths have been reported from avian flu since late 2003, all in Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia. There have been a few cases of possible transmission from one family member to another, but that would have involved massive exposure and it could also be that the second family member got the disease directly from fowl. Nobody is saying that H5N1 is yet a threat to anybody other than bird farmers. But could it become one?

The Human Threat

With all flu viruses, to paraphrase a bumpersticker, mutation happens. Avian flu could randomly mutate to be transmissible between humans. But it would indeed be random, since the virus is doing just fine in the bird population, thank you very much. There is no evolutionary pressure for it to reach out and infect other species. Such mutations nonetheless come along now and then. The infamous Spanish flu, for example, appears to have started as an avian flu.

Another scenario is that somebody with human flu could contract avian flu at the same time and the two flus could "reassort" into a hybrid avian-human flu. The latter two epidemics in the 20th century were such hybrids. The World Health Organization has just reported that there is no evidence this has occurred with H5N1. The best means of reducing this likelihood is to vaccinate as many people as possible (especially in Southeast Asia) against human flu, thus reducing the potential number of "mixing vessels."

The key question: What is the likelihood of either of these scenarios? Anybody who gives you an answer other than "No one really knows the risk," as Richard Webby

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says, is pulling your tail feathers. Webby is a virologist at the Department of Infectious Diseases, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis.

There are no pat formulas, such as the chances of shooting snake eyes or drawing a royal flush. Nor is it just a matter of time. Indeed, one of the arguments against a human outbreak of H5N1 is that sick birds have been mixing with humans for years now without producing a pandemic.

It's practically a state secret that the discovery of H5N1 in poultry dates back not to 1997 but rather to 1959, when it was identified in Scottish chickens. Perhaps haggis had a protective effect on the farmers, but there was a terrible outbreak of the related H5N2 among both chickens and turkeys in Pennsylvania in 1983-85 (17 million birds were destroyed) that appears to have originated as H5N1 in seagulls. So H5N1 has been flying around the globe for over four decades and hasn't done a number on us yet. That doesn't mean it won't ever; but there's absolutely no reason to think it will pick this year or next.

True, you can't compare the massive flocks and tremendous human-bird contact on packed Asian bird farms with the way poultry was raised in Scotland or Pennsylvania. But at the very least, the disease has had eight years of Asian conditions to mutate or become a hybrid, and so far it has not.

The "Overdue" Flu

Still, there are those of great influence who would have us think a pandemic is just around the corner. Reassuringly, their explanations are unscientific. One is that "we're overdue" for a pandemic. Google "avian flu" and "pandemic" and "overdue," and you'll get over 40,000 hits. "In the 20th century there were three pandemics, which means an average of one every 30 years," explained one health official to the *New York Times*. "The last one was in 1968, so it's 37 years. Just on the basis of evolution, of how things go, we're overdue."

Really? It was 39 years from the first pandemic to the second, but only 11 from the second to the third. Is that a pattern, or some white-jacketed yokel demonstrating his ability to do long division? On the other hand, if you knew that this yokel was director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Dr. Anthony Fauci, you might be justified in thinking we *do* have something to be worried about. Nevertheless, Fauci also said some foolish things about the SARS threat, and somehow we managed to survive that. It's instructive that one reason for the 1976 swine flu panic was that "experts warned that pandemics tended to be cyclical and that another one was about due," according to the *New York Times*. What kind of a "cycle" can be either 11 years or 39 years long? Risk-management expert Peter Sandman correctly refers to the concept of the "overdue" pandemic as nothing more than a superstition.

Another source of alarm is a series of reports of mammals becoming infected, including tigers and leopards. But these were zoo animals in Thailand, fed the carcasses of infected poultry. A somewhat alarmingly titled medical journal article, "Probable Tiger-to-Tiger Transmission of Avian Influenza H5N1," actually says nothing more than that such transmission is "possible."

The best surrogate for humans has long been thought to be swine. "Pigs are probably very much like humans," says Webby. "But we showed [in a recent study] that there's not a lot of [H5N1] infection going on with them. The other important factor is that when swine become infected, according to theory, [the virus] becomes better adapted to infect humans. But there's no evidence that's happening," Webby says.

When government researchers finished decoding the genetic sequence of the Spanish flu earlier this year, allowing it to be studied for the first time, some claimed that its genetic code showed great similarity to H5N1. But all influenza viruses are related. Like the avian flu, the Spanish flu had eight gene segments; all flu viruses do. They're both what are called Type A influenzas; but the main type of human flu that circulates each year is Type A. More than 99 percent of the amino acids (basic structural building units of proteins) are identical. But humans and chimpanzees share 96 percent of their DNA. What counts isn't the similarity, but the difference.

The leader of the sequencing team naturally tried to connect the Spanish flu to the avian flu. Jeffery Taubenberger, a molecular pathologist at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in Rockville, Md., told the *Washington Post* that of the roughly 4,400 amino acids in the avian flu, perhaps only 25 would have to mutate properly to create a new Spanish flu. "It could theoretically provide a checklist for surveillance," he told the *Post*. "You might be able to say: this strain has six of these changes; it's a worrisome virus we need to keep our eye on. Or this one has none."

That's a gross oversimplification, though. It's not as if there were a thief intelligently picking a lock with 25 tumblers one by one. When mutations occur, as one tumbler randomly falls into place, another can as easily fall out of place. And remember, those tumblers have been turning for at least 46 years, since the Scottish outbreak. Long before H5N1 becomes transmissible from human to human, it may mutate into a 98-pound weakling, capable of causing little more than a sniffle in humans. Or it may simply wait a few more years before striking, by which

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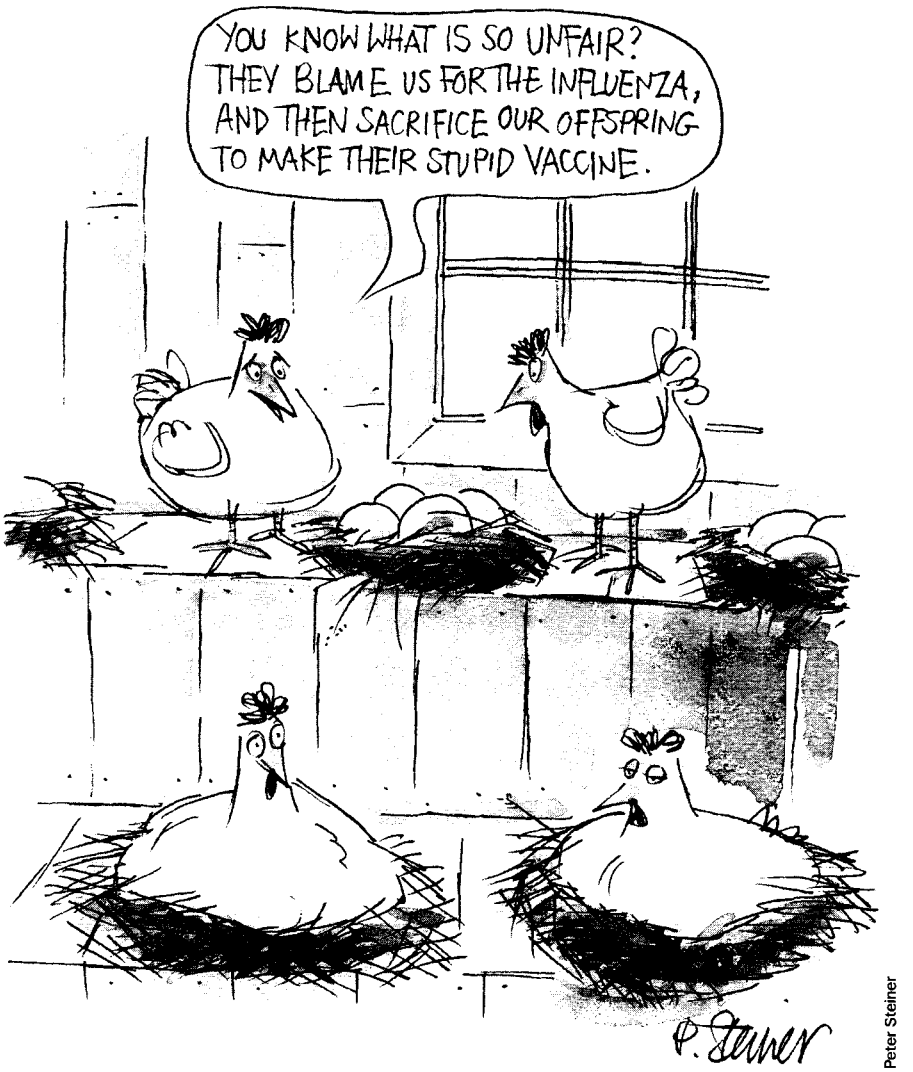

Peter Steiner

time we'll be inundated with vaccine and have so much antiviral medicine stockpiled they'll be giving it away in Crackerjack boxes.

Slowing the (Hypothetical) Spread

What about contagiousness (also called "virulence") if avian flu *does* become a human disease? We have no idea. But we do know that those who enjoy scaring us with images of 1918 have yet again pegged that pandemic wrong in a very important way. Until recently, estimates were that during the Spanish flu each victim infected 20 others. But a Harvard study published in *Nature* last December found that on average each infected person infected only 4 others. This indicates that if one insists on using 1918 as the model, an avian flu pandemic might be brought under localized control more readily than was thought.

Quarantines won't work with flu because of the time lapse between infection (and infectiousness) and the appearance of symptoms, and because some flu carriers *never* become symptomatic. People will have already spread the disease before they show any signs of it themselves. How about the surgical masks that everyone started wearing in Asian cities in 2003, and which became the symbol of the SARS scare? There's such a split of opinion on the effectiveness of masks that the contradictions appear within a single official document. "The use of surgical or procedure masks by infectious patients may help contain their respiratory secretions and limit exposure to others," says a CDC posting from August. "However, no studies have definitively shown that mask use by either infectious patients or health-care personnel prevents influenza transmission." Thanks a lot.

Washing your hands frequently with soap and hot water (or better yet, with alcohol) probably helps, as may keeping your immune system strong with a good diet and enough sleep. And for goodness' sake, don't shake hands with people who sneeze into their own. In other words, practice ordinary good hygiene. And get your annual flu shot to reduce the chances you'll be battling two flus at once.

One possible method of both containment and treatment would be administration of antiviral drugs called neuraminidase inhibitors. Neuraminidase (the 'N' in H5N1) is a protein on the surface of the virus that must multiply in order for the virus to create copies of itself. One such inhibitor is Roche's Tamiflu, which has already become an object of obsession within the larger hysteria. Both governments and individuals are stockpiling it, perhaps in large part as a response to a medical journal article early this year encouraging them to do so. (By coincidence the authors worked for Roche.)

Tamiflu reduces the duration and severity of acute human influenza, and work at St. Jude's has shown that H5N1 appears to express the highest level of neuraminidase of any flu since 1957. Petri dish studies also

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show the twice-daily oral drug strongly inhibits replication of the virus, and it appears to greatly increase survival rates in infected birds. Unfortunately, at least one study published in August in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*—comparing the current H5N1 and that circulating in Hong Kong in 1997—indicates that Tamiflu may be losing its effectiveness. But computer models suggest that quick administration of antivirals in a localized outbreak just might keep it contained.

The U.S. government has stockpiled enough Tamiflu to treat less than 1 percent of the population, although it plans to purchase many times more. That may seem like spit in the wind, but if Tamiflu goes to first responders and health care workers, it might still make a real difference. As part of its $7.1 billion avian flu plan, the Bush administration ultimately aims to have 20 million doses of antivirals on hand.

GlaxoSmithKline's drug Relenza, another neuraminidase inhibitor, also appears effective in reducing avian flu symptoms and death after exposure. Its apparent weakness may actually be a strength. While Tamiflu is taken either as a pill or an oral suspension, Relenza is inhaled. That's bothersome, and because it is, a lot fewer people have been using Relenza over the years, thereby giving H5N1 less chance to develop resistance to it.

Both Tamiflu and Relenza should be taken as soon as flu symptoms become evident, preferably within two days, although at least one animal study showed Tamiflu was still helpful long after what's normally considered the "window of opportunity." It's also okay to take them if it's known that avian flu is truly on the wing. But prophylactic panic-popping of Tamiflu like Chiclets, as happened with the antibiotic Cipro during the U.S. anthrax scare, could encourage viral resistance to the drugs. By the time we would need them, they might not do any good. This is but one price tab for avian flu hysteria.

Even with both antivirals combined, the current world supply would be woefully inadequate if a pandemic broke out in the next few months. But Roche announced in late October that it will license production to numerous other drug companies to make Tamiflu, and some countries have announced they plan to pirate it. Although the time to make the drug is lengthy—perhaps 10 months—in something over a year we could have a mountain of antivirals just smaller than Everest.

Further, a drug that in some animal trials has shown itself superior to both Tamiflu and Relenza, called peramivir, may come into play. In pill form it proved safe in all three phases of human clinical trials, but it wasn't effective enough for the moneyed partner of peramivir's inventor, BioCryst Pharmaceuticals, to proceed with testing injections. Of course, that was before pandemic panic. Now BioCryst says the National Institutes of Health is planning to begin human trials with injections this winter. BioCryst claims peramivir would be far easier and cheaper to produce than Tamiflu and that with an emergency FDA waiver, it could scale up to make 10 million treatments a month.

Ira Longini, a professor of biostatistics at Emory, has created with his colleagues a model of a 3,500-square-mile-area containing half a million people in rural Thailand where, if there is a pandemic, it's likely to start. He thinks health officials would have two weeks to a month to intervene with antivirals before the disease broke out of the cordon, because people in such areas don't tend to jump on jets to JFK.

By hitting the outbreak at the source and not disseminating the drugs across a country, much less a planet, "We are putting the drug where the transmission is and not wasting it," Longini told *USA Today*. Unfortunately, the countries where the pandemic is most likely to emerge are not the ones stockpiling the drugs. By the time a pandemic reached the drug-rich countries, the mountain of pharmaceuticals might do nothing more than take the edge off the disease. "Several million courses sent to Thailand would be more effective than hoarding for nearly 300 million people" in the United States, Longini told the paper.

How Lethal?

One panic button now being pushed repeatedly is that half of all persons contracting H5N1 die. "Right now in human beings, it kills 55 percent of the people it infects," Laurie Garrett told ABC's *Primetime*, on the same show that featured Redlener's billion-death prediction. By comparison, the Spanish flu is believed to have killed 2.5 percent to 5 percent of its victims. The typical flu death rate is less than 1 percent.

The cold-hearted reaction to these reports, paradoxically, is one of relief. A virus that kills its hosts so efficiently cannot easily propagate. (This is one of the reasons Garrett's predicted Ebola pandemic never materialized.) But in fact the reported mortality rate is problematic because of two types of "sample bias."

First, all avian flu deaths so far have occurred in countries with medical systems that are dismal compared with ours. Would you choose a Cambodian hospital to treat your flu? Second, that more or less 50 percent death rate comes from those ill enough to require medical attention—the sickest of the sick. Our experience with normal influenza is that many who become infected have no symptoms at all, nary a sniffle. So we know the numerator, but without the denominator it's useless.

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We do know, however, that there are millions of Asian farmers in constant contact with the saliva and feces of countless birds where the virus has been prevalent. Indeed, blood samples collected from rural Chinese in 1992 indicate that millions had already been infected with H5N1, yet there was no reported outbreak of human disease. An analysis was also conducted after an H7N7 avian flu outbreak in the Netherlands two years ago. It found infections among half of persons who either had contact with the birds or were family members. Were something like that rate to hold true for Southeast Asia, H5N1's mortality rate among infected humans would turn out to be no higher than for human flu.

Certainly there's nothing special about bird flus to make them deadlier. Since 1997, four strains of avian flu have been confirmed in humans besides the notorious H5N1. One, H7N2, occurred in Virginia, causing 44 infections and no deaths. The 2003 Dutch outbreak infected 89 and killed one; H7N3 infected two Canadians, killing neither; H9N2 infected three people in Hong Kong and killed none. "With minimal medical intervention," says Emory's Ira Longini, meaning no flu vaccine, avian flu pandemic "mortality will probably be on the order of between 1 in a thousand to 1 in ten thousand." That's a far cry from 500 in 1,000.

Ultimately, without an effective vaccine, the number of infections in the next pandemic will probably be along the same lines as that of the last two pandemics. (The U.S. government has already purchased over $150 million of vaccine, but it won't be ready until late next year at the earliest.) Deaths, however, would be vastly lower because we have so much better access to medicine. The World Health Organization estimate for deaths from an avian flu pandemic is a reasonable one: "between 2 million and 7.4 million people." Taking into account world population growth (a doubling from 1960 to 2000), that's in the same ballpark as the Asian and Hong Kong pandemics. Nothing to sneeze at, certainly, but neither does it evoke images of men pushing carts of corpses through city streets ringing bells and crying, "Bring out your dead!"

Misunderstanding the Spanish Flu

Panicky people forget that in 1918 antibiotics and antibacterial vaccines that could prevent the deaths caused by secondary infections were still decades away. Panic-purveyors want you to think it doesn't matter. In "The Next Pandemic," her oh-so-spooky *Foreign Affairs* article this summer, Laurie Garrett declares that while "most strains of the flu do not kill people directly" the Spanish flu "was a direct killer," adding, "Had antibiotics existed, they may not have been much help." She couldn't be more wrong. "Even in 1918, there was a window of opportunity so that if they had had drugs they could have made a major difference," says one of the nation's top virologists, Dr. Frederick G. Hayden of the University of Virginia. "It would have been susceptible to both antibiotics and antivirals." John Barry, in his landmark 2004 Spanish flu book, *The Great Influenza*, states that *without* modern drugs "even in the face of this pandemic, doctors could help. They could save lives. If they were good enough, if they had the right resources, if they had the right help, if they had time."

True, no retelling of those horrible days is without anecdotes of apparently healthy *young* people simply dropping dead, such as the man who boarded the trolley car feeling fine only to leave in the company of the grim reaper. But even these probably didn't die from a direct attack of the virus, writes Barry. Rather, "victims' lungs were being ripped apart . . . from the attack of the immune system on the virus."

That explains in great part why an extraordinary number of young people died—they have stronger immune systems. Another apparent reason is that older people had previously been exposed to related strains and acquired immunity, which also explains why isolated populations of aboriginals were slammed the hardest and often enough wiped out. Further, the virus had incubated where an extremely high number of victims were packed together—namely, young soldiers at the Western Front or en route. There was no black magic about Spanish flu that caused it to pick on the young, as we're often led to believe.

What is more, some of the victims who suddenly dropped dead clearly died of pneumonia caused by secondary bacterial infections. Barry explains: "Often influenza victims seemed to recover, even returned to work, then suddenly collapsed again with bacterial pneumonia." In any case, most people died in the usual fashion of subsequent flu epidemics and pandemics. "Autopsy records from New York City found that most of the deaths [from Spanish flu] occurred at the end of the first week and beginning of the second," the University of Virginia's Hayden told me.

Researchers at Stanford have assembled a website that quotes from the medical journals of the time. The principal danger of an influenza infection was its tendency to progress into the often fatal bacterial infection of pneumonia, according to the *British Medical Journal* of July 13, 1918. Sick soldiers at Ft. Lewis, Washington, had sputum and other samples taken and grown in the lab. Commonly found bacteria, according to the April 12, 1919, issue of the *Journal of the American Medical*

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Association, were *pneumococcus*, *streptococcus*, *staphylococcus*, and *Bacillus influenzae* (today called *haemophilus influenzae*).

Comments the Stanford site, "It was this tendency for secondary complications that made this influenza infection so deadly." Writes Barry, "Most deaths almost certainly did come from secondary bacterial infections." In fact, the bacterial infections were so common that even years after the pandemic, many researchers believed the causative agent was bacterial and not viral.

Further reassurance that avian flu isn't something you would catch and drop dead from in the course of a trolley ride comes from medical reports of H5N1 victims, both living and dead. A World Health Organization analysis published in the September 29, 2005, *New England Journal of Medicine* finds that the virus tends to develop more slowly in avian flu victims "than for other known human influenzas." In other words, there is time for medical intervention.

Among the few successful medicines doctors used during the Spanish flu were privately made vaccines for bacterial pneumonia. Today we have something called the pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine. One injection protects against 23 types of pneumococcal bacteria for a lifetime, so you don't have to wait until you're ill or even until there's a pandemic to be inoculated. Bacteria never develop resistance against it, as they do with antibiotics, and it will provide protection against any strain of flu, be it human or avian. A computer model in the Netherlands found that giving this vaccine to just 17 percent of the population prevented 3.5 percent of expected deaths directly and fully a fourth of all hospitalizations. Beds would be scarce during any pandemic and freeing them up would translate into better care for the sick and even more lives saved.

Faced with a sudden shortage of flu vaccine last year caused by a bad batch, the Department of Health and Human Services prevailed upon Merck & Co. to triple its production of its pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine from 6 million to more than 17 million doses. "It could make a real difference to get this vaccine out to people," says Hayden. Chances are excellent this is the first you have heard of the pneumonia vaccine. Somehow this common sense measure has barely been mentioned in the voluminous coverage of flu pandemics—no doubt crowded out by the predictions of hundreds of millions of deaths.

For all the talk about how H5N1 is mutating and what kind of animals it's infecting, if it did become pandemic neither of these would matter nearly as much as the world into which it was launched. The swine flu virus of 1976 really *was* antigenically quite similar to the Spanish flu virus; the "problem," if you want to call it that, was that 1976 had little in common with 1918. There are certainly scary "what-ifs" concerning H5N1. But what truly propels the more hysterical scenarios is the specter of a repeat of 1918-19. Hard to believe that until recently this flu was known as the "Forgotten Epidemic." Today, you can't get through the day without hearing about it. On the other hand, people have been predicting another Spanish flu practically since the first one died out; so this is an old sport.

Yet in addition to realizing there have been astonishing advances in medical knowledge since 1918, it's important to realize that worldwide conditions then provided unique circumstances for increasing both the deadliness and the contagiousness of any type of influenza.

There was a war going on, remember? Not just any war, but history's worst war of attrition. He who throws the most bodies at the enemy wins. And it was a war of trenches. As University of Louisville biologist Paul Ewald observes in his brilliant 1994 book *Evolution of Infectious Disease*, it's the mildest strains of flu that tend to survive and spread, because those are the ones that live long enough for their hosts to communicate to lots of other people. The virulent strains that kill quickly, by the same token, are least likely to be transmitted and to prevail. They quickly get buried with their victims. Trench warfare, he says, flipped this on its head.

At first, as is well documented, the prevailing influenza was indeed mild. But by late summer in France it was turning vicious, because soldiers with mild strains stayed in the trenches and nursed their aches while the sickest ones were packed onto crowded trains and trucks, then squeezed into hospitals already packed with casualties and soon to be bursting at the seams with flu victims.

We have no such disease factories today. Indeed, the only close parallel we have today is—the packed chicken farms of Asia. H5N1 intensified and spread among birds as the Spanish flu did among humans.

Bottom line? We *are* all going to die. But from various causes. There probably will be another pandemic, but nobody knows when or what its origin will be. We do know that with every month that passes, we'll be better prepared. Unless the current panic, having failed to materialize, makes us overly complacent. *That's* a real possibility. In 1976, swine flu went from "next pandemic" to laugh line on *Saturday Night Live* in record time. And as for those anointed experts, public health officials, and reporters whose wall calendars always read "1918"—it's time to buy a new one. ♦

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Losing Propositions

It was a "fantastic" election—for Arnold Schwarzenegger's union enemies.

By Arnold Steinberg

There are many reasons California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger lost all four of the ballot issues he imprudently placed before the voters in a $300-million special election last week. But among these reasons, education is paramount.

Many Republican parents and Republican women stayed away from the polls or voted "No." And there were the independents who had once supported him, along with the "Schwarzenegger Democrats" who'd helped bring him to office just two years ago and now were disenchanted with "the governator," largely over the education issue. Then when Schwarzenegger came out swinging in Propositions 74, 75, 76, and 77—reform measures about which more in a moment—he appeared punitive, seeming to move against schools and teachers, against cops and firefighters and public employees generally. Voters saw him in a power play. One voter who earlier had supported him said to me, "He's so arrogant, he's a fool."

Broadly speaking, Gov. Schwarzenegger last week reaped the penalty for blowing his first year in office. He arrived in Sacramento in November 2003 with, to use his favorite word, "fantastic" popularity: a secure Republican political base, clear majority support among independent voters, and solid inroads among Democrats. This was the time for him to have confronted the tough budget issues and to have faced down the powerful teachers' union, the California Teachers Association (CTA). He could have won, or at least laid the groundwork for a future victory.

But Schwarzenegger, though he seems to have been strategic in his personal life, setting and achieving goals (Mr. Universe, big money, a prestige marriage, Hollywood stardom), has been tactical in politics. In October 2003, California voters removed their governor, Gray Davis, and replaced him with Schwarzenegger in a special recall election. Only a year before, Davis had been reelected, and Schwarzenegger had been focused on his own plan to run for governor in 2006. With that in view, he'd sought to expand his political résumé by sponsoring a vanity ballot issue, Proposition 49.

This measure, once triggered by certain revenue conditions, would create a new statewide program of after-school activities, at an annual cost of nearly half a billion dollars. The state's leading newspapers, most of them liberal, had opposed Prop. 49 as fiscally irresponsible. Indeed, it was exactly the sort of unfunded mandate that Schwarzenegger, as governor, would decry. But since the measure required no tax hike, it had provoked only limited opposition from anti-tax groups, and since it took no funding away from education, the CTA had endorsed it. Schwarzenegger was misled by his easy rapport with the CTA, mistaking the union's willingness to back yet another new government program for friendliness to him. Schwarzenegger had appeared in television ads for Prop. 49, which, thanks in part to the CTA, had won. Little did Schwarzenegger suspect that just three years later, the CTA would destroy him.

To appreciate how the education issue defined last week's special election, it is necessary to rehearse some of the background to California's budget woes. Notably, all the way back in 1988, the state's voters adopted a CTA-sponsored ballot measure to amend the state constitution. Proposition 98 was a unique and reckless claim by public schools on roughly half of any growth in state revenue. If revenue rose in a boom year (remember the dot-com bubble?), that new level would become the baseline for future budgeting for public schools, even if a recession ensued. Research at the time

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indicated that Proposition 98 could be defeated, partly because it's easier to persuade voters to vote "No," but partly because this argument tested potent: The proposed constitutional change would tie the hands of the legislature and was fiscally irresponsible. Shortsighted Republicans, however, influenced by the politically ineffectual state chamber of commerce, failed to mount a vigorous opposition and let it pass by default, locking in an unsound public policy that has haunted them ever since.

Even before he assumed office, governor-elect Schwarzenegger was told that reform of the state's archaic budget process would require modification of Proposition 98. A smart and successful businessman, Schwarzenegger also realized intuitively that funding for schools should be tied to their performance. He enlisted former Los Angeles mayor Dick Riordan, whose passion is education, and whose obsession is accountability, as an unpaid education adviser. Riordan wanted major reforms to provide more authority for principals, and to hold them and teachers accountable. But Riordan did not last. He quickly realized that the CTA would never agree to these reforms, even as a tradeoff for retaining Proposition 98. Chastened by his experience with the teachers' unions in Los Angeles, he saw the naiveté of Schwarzenegger's charm offensive with the CTA. The union was more patient. It cleverly waited out Schwarzenegger's political honeymoon, and his window of opportunity closed.

When Schwarzenegger came into office, the voters were in a reformist mood. They had tired of business as usual. They had just recalled Gov. Davis, less than a year after returning him to office by a comfortable margin. They were excited by the seemingly authentic and genuine Schwarzenegger. They felt the state had been fiscally mismanaged, was in deep money trouble, and needed a big-time overhaul. This was Schwarzenegger's chance, and he blew it.

Influenced partly by his wife, Maria Shriver, and other Democrats, Schwarzenegger opted to paper over the problems. He twisted the arms of Republican legislators to support a $15 billion bond scheme, while refraining from any real fiscal reform to resolve budget problems or tackle the structural deficit. He believed he could separate a "recovery" phase his first year in office from a "reform" phase the second year. This was a strategic blunder. He should have put all his chips on the table when he had a winning hand.

In addition, the new governor was unfocused. He had pitched his "recovery" bonds by saying he would not ask for more borrowing. Yet mere months later, he endorsed a politically correct but ridiculous $3 billion bond issue to subsidize private companies going into the stem cell research business. It would dispense $300 million in tax money annually, without legislative oversight, and regardless of whether the stem cell research showed promise. Like the after-school ballot proposition before he became governor, the stem cell proposition showed Schwarzenegger's lack of rigor.

Once in office, having failed to confront the CTA and other key players at the optimum time, he gave them the advantage when he did take them on. Earlier, he had negotiated Hollywood-style (a deal is a deal, unless . . .) with the teachers' union. The CTA agreed last fiscal year to a temporary legislative adjustment to Proposition 98, and the governor promised to "repay" the education budget this fiscal year. It was a bad deal, inherently difficult for him to keep, and it merely postponed the inevitable. When he eventually reneged, the blow to his credibility was devastating. It would frame the special election.

Oddly, Schwarzenegger and his team seemed stunned, in early 2005, when the CTA ran ads attacking him. It would have been surprising if the union hadn't done so. Schwarzenegger responded in kind. But arguing over whether the governor had or had not reduced the education budget was a losing debate. The only real surprise about the CTA's conduct in the special election campaign was its later decision to borrow against future dues to finance an excessive media buy. It could have defeated Schwarzenegger at half the cost; the union's own vendors probably thought they'd won the lottery. (Republican whining that the unions and Democrats bought this victory is a cop-out. While his opponents outspent Schwarzenegger on television ads, the voters saw both sides' ads *ad nauseam*.)

The centerpiece of Schwarzenegger's reform package was Proposition 76, which would have changed the state budget process and superseded Proposition 98, limiting the automatic, unfunded growth in spending on schools. It would have allowed total state spending to rise by no more than the average annual revenue growth for the prior three years. If the legislature did not do its job, Proposition 76 would have allowed the governor to resolve a budget deficit by unilaterally reducing appropriations. A similar approach is in operation in other states, although Schwarzenegger's campaign never made that clear to the public. Nor did he educate the public about the state's continuing budgetary woes. Just the opposite: Last year he let voters assume that his Democrat-blessed borrowing of $15 billion had resolved the crisis. And he failed to convey any

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Brian Baer / Sacramento Bee / ZUMA Press

That losing feeling: the governor and his wife on election night

sense of urgency about Proposition 76—the ostensible policy reason for the special election—speaking vaguely of "reforms." But he who initiates a special election must meet the burden of proof to win it.

It fell to Attorney General Bill Lockyer, a deeply partisan Democrat, to provide the summary of the measure that went on the petitions circulated among voters to qualify what would become Proposition 76 for the ballot. Lockyer's wording emphasized that the proposed measure would reduce education spending. Schwarzenegger should have seen the writing on the wall. Once the measure qualified for the ballot, Lockyer would be the one to determine its wording on the ballot, probably ensuring the measure's defeat. Even before circulating the petitions, Schwarzenegger should have abandoned this proposition and the whole idea of a special election. Instead, he mounted a costly television campaign, which in part urged voters to support Prop. 76 because it would provide *more* money for education. Nobody believed him. By this time, the governor was widely perceived as, at best, ambivalent and unreliable on school funding.

The CTA took pains to drive the point home. It made the assertion that Schwarzenegger would cut money for schools the center of its attack ads. And, indeed, Proposition 76 would have restrained the automatic growth in school spending assured by Proposition 98. And there's another twist. Remember private-citizen Schwarzenegger's something-for-nothing Proposition 49? The devil is in the details. It turns out the CTA had endorsed Prop. 49 only after Schwarzenegger rewrote it to "continuously appropriate" without legislative action, in the manner of the CTA's sacrosanct Proposition 98, and also to explicitly recognize the supremacy of Proposition 98. Arnold's Proposition 76 would have undone Arnold's Proposition 49. Sometimes the cure kills the patient.

Schwarzenegger should also have known his poll-driven but still thoughtful school reform, Proposition 74, was doomed from the start. It would be guilt by association with Prop. 76. The measure proposed to increase from two to five consecutive years the period required for a teacher to achieve tenure. It would also have made it easier to dismiss a tenured teacher who received two consecutive unsatisfactory performance evaluations.

Back in 2003, when disenchantment with Gov. Davis was at its height and Schwarzenegger's stock was soaring, all he had to do to become governor was stay out of

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trouble. His campaign was brief—measured in weeks, not months—and he coasted to victory without ever being seriously vetted by an opponent or the press. Along the way, he gushed about the need for more money for schools. He never even hinted that education was about anything more than dollars. A serious conservative would have prepared the voters for education reforms. It apparently never occurred to Schwarzenegger or his advisers that he was setting himself up for a fall.

Once in office, Schwarzenegger gravely miscalculated. Lulled by his high job approval (64 percent approve, 17 percent disapprove), he ducked a confrontation with the CTA, a sacred cow. But CTA ad campaigns over many years had cultivated a public obsession with school spending, not reform. Indeed, the CTA had been able to roll back charter schools and fend off school choice altogether.

Surely, Schwarzenegger is right about the need to reform teacher tenure and make it easier to fire incompetents. It is to his credit that he ultimately tried to address these issues with Proposition 74. But his flagship reform, Proposition 76, was tagged early by the CTA as anti-education, and it defined this special election. Proposition 76 was behind in the polls from the outset. Incredibly, Schwarzenegger's pollsters tried to hide the truth by using a paraphrase to "explain" Proposition 76 when they tested its popularity, rather than presenting survey respondents with the wording that would appear on the ballot. But the defeat of Proposition 76 was a foregone conclusion. As for Proposition 74, it was perceived as linked, a power grab by a governor hostile to public education.

Schwarzenegger made matters worse by strongly supporting two ballot propositions originated by others.

Proposition 77 was about redistricting, an unexciting issue. It was mainly an alibi for the failure of Schwarzenegger, a popular governor who spent big money, to gain a single legislative seat in the prior year's election. Proposition 77 would have replaced the current system of reapportionment with the drawing of districts by three retired judges. In itself, this was a loser—a similar "judges" reapportionment initiative had been defeated 20 years ago. Besides, Schwarzenegger was portrayed as imperial, wanting to let three obscure white guys in a back room carve up California. The White House, Karl Rove, and the Republican National Committee were less than enthusiastic about a plan they thought threatened several Republican seats in Congress. Former Republican House leader Dick Armey signed mailings against Prop. 77. Leftist-turned-conservative David Horowitz did radio spots against Prop. 77. Schwarzenegger, meanwhile, as if he didn't have enough problems of his own, endorsed an anti-Republican redistricting plan in Ohio.

Things went still further downhill when Schwarzenegger embraced Proposition 75, which would have required a public employee union member's approval before his or her dues could be used to support a political campaign, a scheme known as "paycheck protection." This measure had originally qualified for *next year's* ballot, and might have passed. It was initially popular. But in the context of the special election, it seemed punitive, as if the governor were trying to crush his union enemies. Just before Election Day, the *Wall Street Journal* observed that Schwarzenegger's opponents were portraying him as "the foe of those who treat the sick, teach the children and protect homes—as opposed to a foe of their union leaders."

By linking his now unpopular brand (Schwarzenegger's job approval had fallen from +47 to -21) with these four ballot propositions, Schwarzenegger ensured all of them would lose. He had hoped that yoking the four measures together would help them pass: that Proposition 75, polling way ahead, would carry the other three (74, modestly ahead; 77 a toss-up; and 76, which had started it all, losing badly). The more likely outcome occurred: Proposition 76, seen as reducing public education spending, killed the slate.

This was no liberal plot. Even the *Los Angeles Times* endorsed Propositions 74, 75, and 77. Rather, the special election reaffirmed the need for conservatives and Republicans to change the way the education issue is debated. Until the conversation moves beyond funding to include reform of tenure, charter schools, and eventually school choice, conservatives will continue to lose.

It would have been better if there had been no special election, as even the governor now publicly admits. He says it's hindsight. But the truth is, this wipeout was predictable and therefore avoidable. It was also costly. Not only has this debacle diminished the governor's prospects for reelection next year. More important, the mishandling of these ballot issues is analogous to that of two school choice measures defeated in California in 1993 and 2000. Once again, needed public policy reforms have been needlessly repudiated.

And not just the policies embodied in the four propositions. Belatedly, Schwarzenegger had also recognized the need to reform the state's public employee pension system. But his team ineptly drafted a measure that failed to provide for the widows and orphans of cops and firefighters who died in the line of duty. This, of course, energized the normally Republican public

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safety folks to oppose him. (He had already offended nurses with his notorious comment last December that he would "kick their butts" in Sacramento, as he does with other special interests.) Schwarzenegger eventually pulled the pension measure, but the damage was done. He and his team looked incompetent. And reform of the pension system was derailed.

Then there is parental notification. As long as anyone can remember, this issue has resonated with the public. Even some pro-choice voters believe parents should be notified before a minor has an abortion. That's why yet another issue placed before the voters last week—Proposition 73, "Waiting Period and Parental Notification Before Termination of Minor's Pregnancy"—was widely regarded as a certain winner. It polled well, and Schwarzenegger's political consultants were glad to have it on the ballot.

James Holman, a San Diego pro-life publisher of weekly newspapers, had provided much of the money to qualify the measure for the ballot. But he and his colleagues irresponsibly had not planned for a campaign. They probably reasoned that once the measure made it onto the ballot, it would easily pass. They also failed to anticipate the special election. Normally, the voters would have decided the fate of parental notification next year. But once a measure has qualified for the ballot, it goes before the voters at the next election. Schwarzenegger, himself pro-choice, endorsed Proposition 73 (though his team was divided). He hoped the measure would boost pro-life turnout, bringing more Republicans to the polls to support his reform propositions. Also, he could take credit for successful passage of Prop. 73.

In the final two weeks of the campaign, however, Planned Parenthood began a limited television media buy with an effective ad ("Our daughters grow up so quickly these days. And we have so much to teach them. How to be responsible. How to make good decisions. If my daughter were to get pregnant, of course, I'd want her to tell me. But Prop. 73 can't force teens to talk to their parents. Some teens just can't. . . . "). It was a one-sided air war. The "Yes" side was reduced to grassroots activism among pro-life groups and churches. None of this was Schwarzenegger's fault. But the momentum to vote "No" generated by his slate is what assured the defeat of Prop. 73. It was defeated 52.6 percent to 47.4 percent.

The Schwarzenegger team had hoped for a low voter turnout, but their own high-profile campaign raised the stakes. Besides, their strategy was flawed. Low turnout would favor the highly mobilized public employee unions. The CTA alone has 330,000 members. The California Federation of Teachers has another 70,000. The California Correctional Peace Officers Association (prison guards) has 25,000. Add police, sheriffs, firefighters, nurses, and all the other state employees and their families. The smaller the turnout, the greater the impact of these public employees. While teachers and cops turned out in droves, too many Republican parents and women stayed home or defected outright on the education issue. The result was a rout. Propositions 74, 75, 76, and 77 were rejected by, respectively, 55 percent, 53.5 percent, 62 percent, and 59.5 percent of the vote.

Consider the wreckage. Post-mortems will fault the governor's ideology. The media will write that the election results, like his bad numbers, prove he is too right-wing. And conservatives have other reasons for gloom. Since the election, Schwarzenegger has accepted responsibility for the fiasco, but earlier he gave credence to charges that he is too partisan. And his aides publicly criticized President Bush for coming to California shortly before the special election. Worse, Schwarzenegger has polarized the electorate *without getting anything done.*

Indeed, his final television ads actually implied that taxes would be raised unless Proposition 76 passed ("Say yes to 76, say no to a tax increase next year"). Schwarzenegger put his personal millions into the campaign's final days (relying on wishful polling?), hoping to salvage either 74 or 75, probably not 77, certainly not 76. So, what was he thinking with that final ad for Prop. 76? Maybe all along he intended to use a Proposition 76 defeat to explain away a tax hike. Democrats in the state legislature would jump at a tax hike, but Schwarzenegger (and Republicans) would still get blamed.

Early on, before the special election was irreversible, Schwarzenegger tried to negotiate a way to avoid it. Assembly speaker Fabian Nuñez said he would "check with my people." Schwarzenegger assumed that meant Democratic legislators, not union leaders. By then, the union leaders wanted a special election they knew they would win. Besides, their vendors saw dollar signs in the mother of all political wars. Told of the governor's overture, one of the unions' top political consultants said, "F— Arnold."

Maria Shriver never endorsed her husband's ballot proposals. Now, she will appear the supportive wife. She long ago settled on the team of advisers that has failed. Now, she is choosing a new team. And she will help shape policy, probably moving it left. That may mean more money for schools—but it bodes ill for major reforms that California needs. ♦

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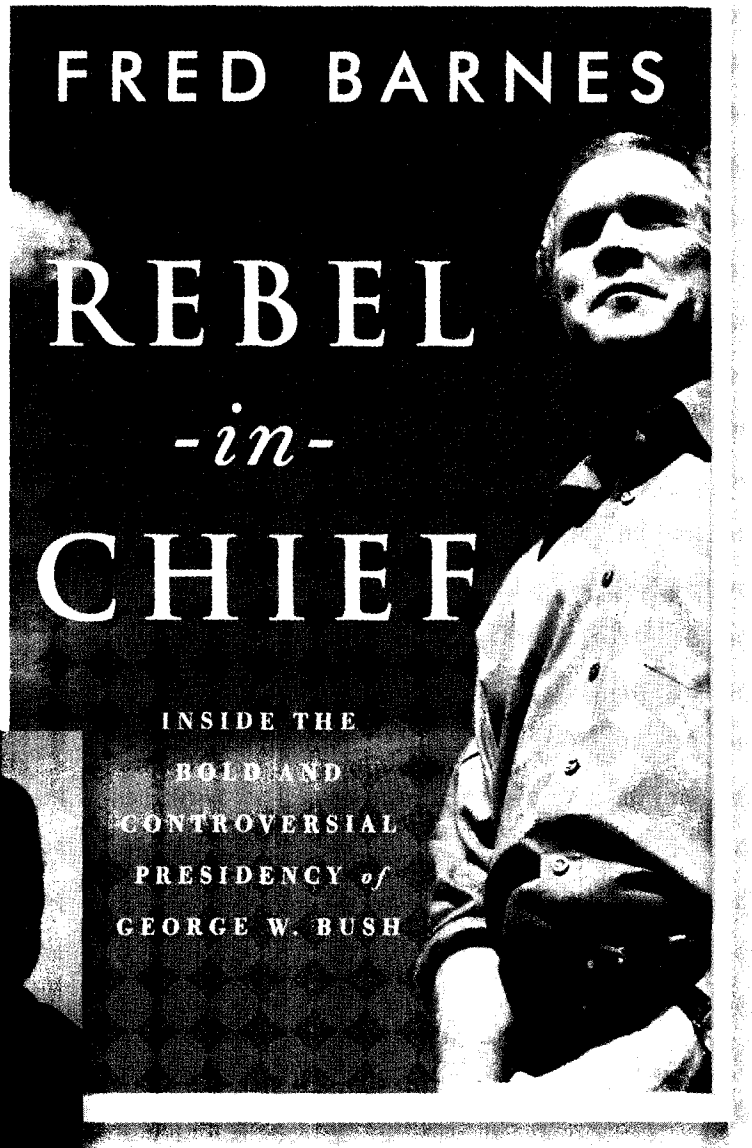

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David Dubinsky, Lyndon Johnson, 1966

Labor's Little Giant

Once there was something called the 'labor vote' By Arnold Beichman

The first time I met David Dubinsky, president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), was in 1942 as he was strolling on the Atlantic City boardwalk with a few colleagues. As a novice labor reporter on the liberal-left newspaper *PM*, which was loaded with Communist staffers, open and concealed, I had been assigned by *PM*'s labor editor James Wechsler, an anti-Communist like me, to cover the union's executive board meeting.

I walked up to the 50-year-old Dubinsky and introduced myself. He greeted me with a sneer: "Aha, another Communist from *PM*."

I don't know what impelled me to reply: "If you were 10 years younger, I'd kick the sh—t out of you."

I then turned and strode away. I grabbed a boardwalk hot dog for lunch and then sat down in the hotel lobby, site of the ILG board meeting, trying to figure out how I would manage to get a story after insulting the union president. About 2 o'clock, Joe Shaplen, the *New York Times* labor reporter, came up to me. Shaplen (his son, Bob, became a noted foreign correspondent) and I had met several times when I was a stringer for the *Times* and he knew my politics. Said Shaplen: "Dubinsky says you should come into the board meeting. We'll go in together."

The Master of Seventh Avenue
David Dubinsky and the American Labor Movement
by Robert D. Parmet
New York University, 436 pp., $45

Obviously, Shaplen had given me full political clearance. There was an important story at the board meeting: Dubinsky had decided that his union ought to secede from the nascent Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) to return to the American Federation of Labor. John L. Lewis, the CIO founding president, had invited the Communist party to recruit CIO organizers. When Dubinsky had remonstrated with Lewis over his coziness with the CP, Lewis said teasingly, "Well, Dave, who gets the bird, the hunter or the dog?"

A few years later, when Lewis, still the isolationist, even after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, had been kicked out as CIO president by his erstwhile CP colleagues, Dubinsky taunted him with, "So, John, who gets the bird, the hunter or the dog?"

To understand Dubinsky's impor-

Arnold Beichman is a Hoover Institution research fellow. His updated biography, Herman Wouk: The Novelist as Social Historian, *was recently published.*

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tance in American history, not merely labor history, and why he deserves a serious, scholarly biography, it is important to understand how furiously the Soviet Union was dedicated to penetrating and controlling Western trade unions. It was a task assigned by Lenin, who had written that Communists must "agree to any sacrifice and even—if need be—to resort to all sorts of stratagems, artifices, illegal methods, to evasions and subterfuges, so as to get into the trade unions, and to remain in them, and to carry on Communist work within them at all costs."

In post-World War II France and Italy, Moscow-controlled Communist parties controlled trade unions in strategic sectors of the economy like the waterfronts. There were months in postwar Europe when the only way to ship NATO arms to both countries was by plane. The Communist-controlled dockers' unions in Marseilles and Leghorn barred unloading vehicles and ordnance from American freighters. One-quarter of the CIO executive board were either CP members or under CP control.

The Soviet attempt to take over the unions had begun in the aftermath of the Russian revolution. And the resistance came almost immediately from Dubinsky's union. He was reviled by the CP, which composed a little ditty that ran something like this:

Oh, the cloakmakers union is a no-good union,
It's a right-wing union by the boss.

And it concluded with this refrain:

Oh! They preach socialism and they practice fascism
In the right-wing union by the boss.

Dubinsky was what we would today call an anti-Communist hardliner. It is a lamentable omission from this biography. Whether out of ignorance or political choice, Robert Parmet devotes a mere sentence to an important event in Dubinsky's political career.

In 1941, Stalin ordered the arrest, as Nazi spies, of two Polish Jewish socialists, Henryk Ehrlich and Victor Alter, both of whom had sought refuge in the Soviet Union from the invading German army. Both men had been members of the Polish Socialist Bund. Determined to wipe out any trace of Polish independence, Stalin ordered the Katyn massacre, in which some 5,000 Polish officers were executed. The Alter-Ehrlich arrests were part of the same genocidal, anti-Polish pattern.

Dubinsky had known both men as a boy in Poland before he emigrated to the United States. When he heard about their arrest, he announced a public protest meeting at Carnegie Hall. Here is where a little scholarly research would have been in order. In the name of winning World War II, Dubinsky was pressured privately to call off this meeting by such eminences as Eleanor Roosevelt, who said she was speaking for FDR. Wendell Wilke sent a letter to Dubinsky saying he wouldn't appear at the protest meeting lest he lose his influence with Vyacheslav Molotov, Stalin's foreign minister.

Another aspect of Dubinsky's anti-communism was his underwriting of the fight against the 1949 Stockholm Peace Appeal, when the Moscow road show—including the composer Dmitri Shostakovich, no less—came to New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel. With Sidney Hook, the embattled philosopher, in the lead, a group of us organized an ad hoc organization which we called Americans for Intellectual Freedom. From somewhere, Dubinsky found the money to finance our coup.

The Dubinsky era encompassed a time when the American labor movement was truly a movement, and was accepted as an integral part of the political process. The founder of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers, had laid down this edict: Reward your friends and punish your enemies. In other words, no undying loyalty to any one political party.

Major newspapers and periodicals had labor reporters because labor was regarded as an important, full-time beat, which it no longer is. The *New York Times* once had three labor reporters, one of whom, Louis Stark, won the 1942 Pulitzer Prize "for distinguished reporting of labor stories." Labor leaders like George Meany, Walter Reuther, and Dubinsky were sought after as spokesmen for an important sector of the population. Lyndon Johnson was the last president to worry about the labor vote. (One of the book's excellent collection of photographs shows the six-foot-three LBJ helping the five-foot Dubinsky into his overcoat after a White House visit.)

Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan got along without the "labor vote," whatever it represented in the late 1960s and thereafter. But in the Roosevelt era the labor vote was so important that, in 1939, FDR, preparing for a third-term bid, wrote to Lewis and the AFL president William Green, pleading with them to "end the breach" and negotiate "peace with honor."

Dubinsky was a man of fixed principle on the question of communism and union corruption, but he was pretty flexible about everything else. I was witness to an example of his flexibility. It was during a discussion between Green's successor, George Meany, and Dubinsky on whether to accept a large grant offered to the AFL by the Ford Foundation for a history of the American labor movement. Meany, conscious of past labor difficulties with management, and possible future difficulties, insisted on rejecting the offer. Dubinsky demurred and said, in Yiddish, which he then translated with a grin for Meany's benefit: *"Der goy is trayff aber sein gelt is kosher"*—or, the gentile is non-kosher but his money is not. But the decision of the blunt-spoken Meany, no *shtetl* casuist like Dubinsky, won the day.

The foregoing is a helluva thing to be doing to an author whose admirable scholarly work I am supposed to be reviewing. Parmet's work will surely have an honored place on the shelves of Cornell University's Kheel Labor Center, as has an earlier work, *David Dubinsky: A Life with Labor*, co-authored by Dubinsky himself and A.H. Raskin, one of the *New York Times*'s famed labor reporters. ♦

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Poetry in Motion

New collections from Richard Howard and Kay Ryan. BY DAVID YEZZI

A fruitful tension exists in contemporary poetry between the delicious excesses of the baroque style and the sly simplicities of the plain style. The dichotomy is an age-old one; for hundreds of years, poets have squared off along similar lines.

C.S. Lewis, in his provocative Oxford history, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (1954), contrasts the "drab" poets of the middle 1500s with the "golden" style of the late Elizabethans. Lewis's very terms betray his preference for the honeyed music of Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86) over the unadorned rhythms of George Gascoigne (1534-77) and Barnaby Googe (1540-94). In response, critics such as Yvor Winters have capably shown "the smooth and plain style" (Googe's words) to be every bit as forceful as the ornate. In the end, poetry in English cannot do without either tendency and, indeed, the two strains intertwine in the very DNA of the language, which happily weds the earthy monosyllables of Anglo-Saxon with the sesquipedalian lilt of Latin.

In characterizing the poems of Richard Howard's latest collection, one is tempted to bypass "golden" as a description and head straight on to platinum. Now in his eighth decade, Howard has long been—along with the late James Merrill, who jokingly coined the phrase—one of American poetry's "Great Fancies."

"I know how you love dessert," says the speaker of "In Loco Parentis," and Howard clearly likes to indulge a stylistic sweet tooth of his own. Linguistic confections are served up with an extra dollop of *crème Chantilly*, like something out of a Wayne Thiebaud painting. But Howard has more on offer than sweets. Reading through his new poems, often gently linked by subject or theme, one may choose from a range of rich dishes. Their ingredients are gathered from high art and Western culture—painting, sculpture, opera, polyglot speech—and always salted with a pinch of gossip.

The Silent Treatment
New Poems
by Richard Howard
Turtle Point, 96 pp., $16.95

The Niagara River
by Kay Ryan
Grove, 96 pp., $13

CORBIS
Richard Howard

Howard's many historical speakers (in dramatic monologues, letters, diaries), as well as their addressees and the figures they discuss, all attest to his fondness for the *recherché* and the exorbitant. The range is dizzying: from a poem in the voice of the editor Blanche Knopf (wife of Alfred A.), who receives a slight from Joseph Conrad in the Louvre; to an after-dinner address by the 18th-century painter Anton Raphael Mengs to his colleagues in Rome; to the lost diary entries of Cosima Wagner, in which she describes George Eliot chastising her and her husband, Richard, for their anti-Semitism; to the wildly precocious voice of Baby Ivory, an infant in a family portrait by the Arkansas photographer Mike Disfarmer; to a series of letters written to George Santayana by a former student, who tells of meeting Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, the famous dandy portrayed by Whistler, and the model for Proust's Baron Palamède de Charlus.

Howard swathes his toney subjects in suitably opulent language. "The Silent Treatment," an homage to the great contemporary sculptor Natalie Charkow Hollander (whose "Nine Caves and Their Inhabitants" graces the book cover), begins with these stanzas:

After La Spezia our train shadowed
the Ligurian coast through
a blind repetition of tunnels
on its promised route to Genoa,
though not at all promising
were those deafening darknesses,
sudden
stretches of inhumation during which
my own face at the window
(now but a bituminous mirror)
became a sort of luminous ghost
instantaneously
exorcised by an unforeseeable
glimpse of glistening sea enclosed by
crags
and, right under that window,
what appeared to be naked
cadavers—but then vision vanished,
the tunnels resumed, and we
were in the dark, maybe this time for
good!

Howard spangles line after line with fireworks, beginning with the blooming of exotic place names. His characteristic play on the different senses of *promise* leads into the synesthetic flourish of "deafening darknesses." Note how "luminous" reflects back on "bituminous," and the phrase "glimpse of glistening sea enclosed by crags" ushers along its attendant "g"s with gusto. The rhythms of Howard's exquisite syllabic verse readily accommodate such tour-de-force phrasing as "stretches of inhumation" (with its echo if "inhuman") and the placement of "instantaneously," which handily

David Yezzi, poetry editor of the New Criterion, *is the author of* The Hidden Model.

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fills out its five-beat line with a single word.

Howard's poems provide countless pleasures for the reader. Their almost hedonistic abandon—musically, tonally, syntactically—can be wildly intoxicating. Still, it occasionally feels as if one has sat down with an experienced absinthe drinker and been drunk under the table. Sometimes poems are better served like strong cups of coffee: clarifying, energizing, without the hangover. In the best poems here, Howard's more sober themes resonate from even his most ingenious inventions. "A Mistaken Identity" elaborates the kooky notion that Howard, while viewing pictures in a gallery, has actually discovered that the boy depicted in one of Peter Paul Rubens's earliest works is actually the poet's own former student and friend, Craig Teicher. Howard, addressing the young man, wants to know what life was like back then, only to be met with Teicher's silence.

Despite its wacky premise, the poem picks up on the elegiac note sounded by the book's dedication to recently deceased friends, the poets Donald Justice, Anthony Hecht, and Mona Van Duyn. The poem concludes:

Mistaken identities are merely
magical accidents, not
a form of communion with the Great
Dead.
It's become clear to me that time, even
even in the hands of young Rubens—
time can do everything but tell,
Craig . . .
Happily there is another means of
intercourse, outside of time.
It's called the present. It does not exist
until we live in it, unless we live . . .
I won't look for you again
in the gallery where I know you hang
out. I have a better method. Call me
now. We'll talk to each other.

Faced with the mute past, with its great dead, Howard chooses the present, chooses life. His capacity for intimate, nearly erotic, intensity emblazons such passages in the memory. As the figure of Blanche Knopf says, early in the volume, "I want to discuss / something intimate. Not just / about you or me, but *us*: that's what makes it / intimate." Include in this "us" the poet and the reader. Howard's signature gift circumscribes a paradox: He makes even his most far-flung subjects feel disquietingly close.

Kay Ryan's poems radiate from the opposite end of the spectrum. Where Howard is a maximalist, she is a minimalist. Where Howard's poems are centrifugal—spinning outward in an onrush of dramatic voices and wide-ranging allusions—Ryan's are centripetal, carried inward on the idiosyncratic music of a singular voice that seldom refers to anything beyond the terms of the poem itself. Howard's poems frequently span many pages; Ryan's rarely exceed one. Howard sends the reader scampering for *Webster's*; Ryan's diction is largely monosyllabic in a way that old Barnaby Googe would have adored. Her willfully low-key ingredients are then leavened by one of the finest (and funniest) caustic wits in contemporary poetry, and by a humane melancholia that lends the poems urgency, and grounds them in deep feeling.

"Home to Roost" works its compressed magic on an old cliché:

The chickens
are circling and
blotting out the
day. The sun is
bright, but the
chickens are in
the way. Yes,
the sky is dark
with chickens,
dense with them.
They turn and
then they turn
again. These
are the chickens
you let loose
one at a time
and small—
various breeds.
Now they have
come home
to roost—all
the same kind
at the same speed.

At what point does the poem switch—delicately, almost imperceptibly—to a minor key? The comic notes sounded at the outset (flying chickens, indeed!), underscored by the internal rhyme day / way and the insistent "yes" meant to tweak our incredulity, produce a smirk. So does the travesty of Eliot's "Because I do not hope to turn again" and Yeats's "Turning and turning in the widening gyre," which dashes modernist poetics on the rocks of its own imperious shores.

But then comes the shudder of recognition: These birds represent something of great delicacy and variety; great care was taken in letting them loose "one at a time." Well, here they are again, the poet tells us, returned in lockstep and with an ominous uniformity, like a parade of storm troopers. Chekhov is another modern writer who keeps us laughing until the moment we are brought up short by the opposite of laughter. Ryan closes with a showstopper, as "all" reaches up to claw at "small." The poem sends our own personal chickens—the bitter specters of our best intentions—whirling into the air.

Occasionally, Ryan's serendipitous rhymes and tightly turned ruminations approach a kind of light verse, sporting an against-the-grain delight in wit and a rare confidence that humor needn't cancel the truth in a poem. "Atlas," for example, tickles the reader while shrewdly identifying a palpable human experience:

Extreme exertion
isolates a person
from help,
discovered Atlas.
Once a certain
shoulder-to-burden
ratio collapses,
there is so little
others can do:
they can't
lend a hand
with Brazil
and not stand
on Peru.

The argument of the poem remains self-specific, its logic intact, while the experience it describes resonates broadly, becoming universal. Anyone may appreciate the inherent difficulty of coming to another's aid. Certainly any parent, or teacher, or friend, will appreciate the problem, and even feel a twinge of remorse, for the many Perus they have trampled while trying to be of

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help. One might be tempted to see Ryan's poems as a brand of what Harold Bloom has called "wisdom writing," if they just weren't so damned funny—and sad.

Ryan's work can be deadly serious as well, as in this passage from her elegy for the Holocaust-haunted writer W.G. Sebald, entitled "He Lit a Fire with Icicles."

How
cold he had
to get to learn
that ice would
burn. How cold
he had to stay.
When he could
feel his feet
he had to
back away.

The final rhyme lends an affecting sweetness to the poem, which doubles, like Auden's elegy for Yeats, as an apt bit of literary criticism. Such versatility as Ryan displays occurs rarely. Poets often develop a single mode and stick to it; yet, reading Ryan, one has the feeling that, while her lyrics proceed in their signature spindle of highly musical speech, she is constantly searching for new ground.

Her poems are at once modest of means and boldly immodest in scope and in their desire to communicate the high-stakes information of the heart. "Ideal Audience" gets at the nature of this desire:

Not scattered legions,
not a dozen from
a single region
for whom accent
matters, not a seven-
member coven,
not five shirttail
cousins; just
one free citizen—
maybe not alive
now even—who
will know with
exquisite gloom
that only we two
ever found this room.

Ryan's poems are not written for billboards but for the solitary reader who, against the odds, has come upon her work and been moved by it. That reader, if you are lucky, may even be you. ♦

Alexander's Nemesis

After 2,300 years, history may not repeat itself.

BY GRAEME WOOD

Now that Afghan civil aviation is up and running, anyone with fifty bucks for a plane ticket can view Afghanistan from 10,000 feet up. At ground level, bustling conurbations like Kabul and Herat easily fool a visitor into thinking he is (despite the stranglingly bad air, laden with car exhaust and airborne donkey feces) within a hundred years of the present day. But to see from the window of a decrepit Kam Air Antonov is to be disabused: blue lakes and bleak crags roll across the window, punctuated infrequently by hamlets of astonishing archaism. The villages' crooked pastures and mangers of mangy beasts could have existed in identical form in the ages of Brezhnev, Kipling, Babur, or Alexander the Great. Many villages appear to have no roads connecting them to each other, or to the relative outposts of progress at Kabul, Herat, or Mazar-e-Sharif.

Into the Land of Bones
Alexander the Great in Afghanistan
by Frank L. Holt
California, 241 pp., $24.95

With such a view, it is not a matter of imagining Afghanistan as it was during the age of Alexander, but of realizing that most of the country has never left that age, and that time is an illusion to which only the small population of Afghan city-dwellers has succumbed.

Frank Holt's excellent account of Alexander the Great's campaigns in Afghanistan relies on this premise to construct a cautionary narrative about American visions of empire in Central Asia. The premise is mostly correct: Even after four years of aid—and with the exception of Kabul and a few other spots—Afghanistan remains only marginally better off than it was in ancient times, and the difficulties of terror and subjugation then hold lessons for war and development today.

Graeme Wood, who was in Afghanistan and Pakistan's North-West Frontier during 2001 and 2004, lives in Iraq.

After his father Philip of Macedon's death in 336 B.C., Alexander led his army on the longest and bloodiest military tour ever, cutting a swath of terror through ancient Iraq and Iran. In old Persian sources, he is known as "the Cursed" for torching Babylon (in modern Hilla, Iraq) and Persepolis (near Shiraz, Iran) and deposing Darius, Shah of Shahs. From Persepolis, Alexander would have continued east anyway, but the hubris of Bessus, a satrap who challenged Alexander's suzerainty, provided a convenient pretext to cross swiftly into the land not yet known as the grave of empires.

Holt's most vivid passages describe what happened next. Bessus hid in Bactria, in the city now known as Balkh, and remained defiant. (Balkh today bears every mark of having been reduced to rubble repeatedly; there is almost nothing to hint at its former glory.) Alexander's armies moved in, dismantled resistance along the way, and took Bessus captive without much difficulty. As punishment Bessus was, Holt writes, "literally defaced," his noble features snipped, ripped, or smeared from the front of his skull.

Things then got ugly: Alexander's men bristled at their leader's growing pretensions of divinity; they hated his eagerness to take on Persian customs and dress. He wed a Bactrian, known to history as Roshanak or Roxane, and demanded that his generals find Persian mates of their own. (Tales of

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CORBIS / Araldo de Luca

Roman mosaic of Alexander the Great at the Battle of Issus

Alexander persist in the region: The Chitralis of northern Pakistan attribute their green eyes and fair hair to Alexander's men. The claim is spurious, though it has more cachet than tracing one's lineage to centuries of Russian rapists and anonymous mustachioed British colonial officers.)

Fierce locals murdered Alexander's deputies and ran to the hills to hide from reprisals. With time, the Macedonians wondered why they had spent so much time and blood to subdue a barbarous backwater. Worse still, those wounded or too old to proceed faced garrison duty in Afghanistan and a virtual guarantee that they would never see the sea again. Eventually, dissension became so general that Alexander had to suspend his depredations in the Punjab and return to Persia. He died in Babylon at 32, his Afghan territories in disarray.

Holt draws parallels both broad and specific between the campaigns of Alexander and the later conquests of Afghanistan by the British, the Soviets, and the United States. Like the latter-day conquerors, Alexander's men saw the locals as backward, even wicked, and in Alexander's case they viewed the indigenous rituals as reason enough to put the Bactrians to the sword. (One Macedonian officer remarked that the Bactrians looked so horrible that they should be fought only at night.) All invaders faced a highly mobile local enemy with almost no logistical needs whatsoever. Alexander's army needed 160,000 gallons of water per day; the British had two support soldiers for every one on the frontline; and the American logistical train today is much, much longer than either.

Most unsettling is the recurring trope of premature victory. All invasions of Afghanistan have started off well, with the main population centers falling rapidly. The conquerors declared triumph, and immediately began a slow and bloody unraveling that ended with retreat and varying degrees of whimpering and ignominy. Under Holt's comparison, International Security Assistance Force has gotten as far as the premature victory declaration, and now it must stay wary of the unraveling. *Into the Land of Bones* was completed in 2004; but even by then, it was clear that Taliban sympathizers still operated with impunity on the Pakistan frontier, as they do today, and that the final phase might be underway.

Holt's book is among the best accounts of the Afghan wars, and his warnings for us are sound and smart. When he writes that the United States in Afghanistan "does not have history on its side," he is stating fact, not opinion. But the good news is that many of the historical weaknesses of armies occupying Afghanistan are being corrected. For example, unlike its forerunners, the U.S. military—particularly its Special Forces—has shown itself capable of outmaneuvering local fighters on their own ground. The military as a whole lumbers and needs its logistical nourishment on a regular basis. But in small numbers, the United States proved incredibly spry. In its immensely successful December 2001 campaign in northern Afghanistan, Special Forces rode Afghan horses the size of adolescent burros and outmaneuvered the Taliban decisively. Pathans in Jalalabad told me last year that they had encountered U.S. soldiers south of the city, near restive Paktia, and were spooked to find that military translators' Pashto skills and local knowledge were indistinguishable from a native's.

Alexander and the Soviets also had different goals from the United States, as well as less sensitivity to human rights and civilian affairs. Alexander razed whole towns of fellow Greeks, to say nothing of Bactrians. He used collective punishment techniques familiar to modern Afghans from the Soviet occupation. The total body count in Alexander's campaigns ran to 120,000—a figure of genocidal proportions given the population at the time.

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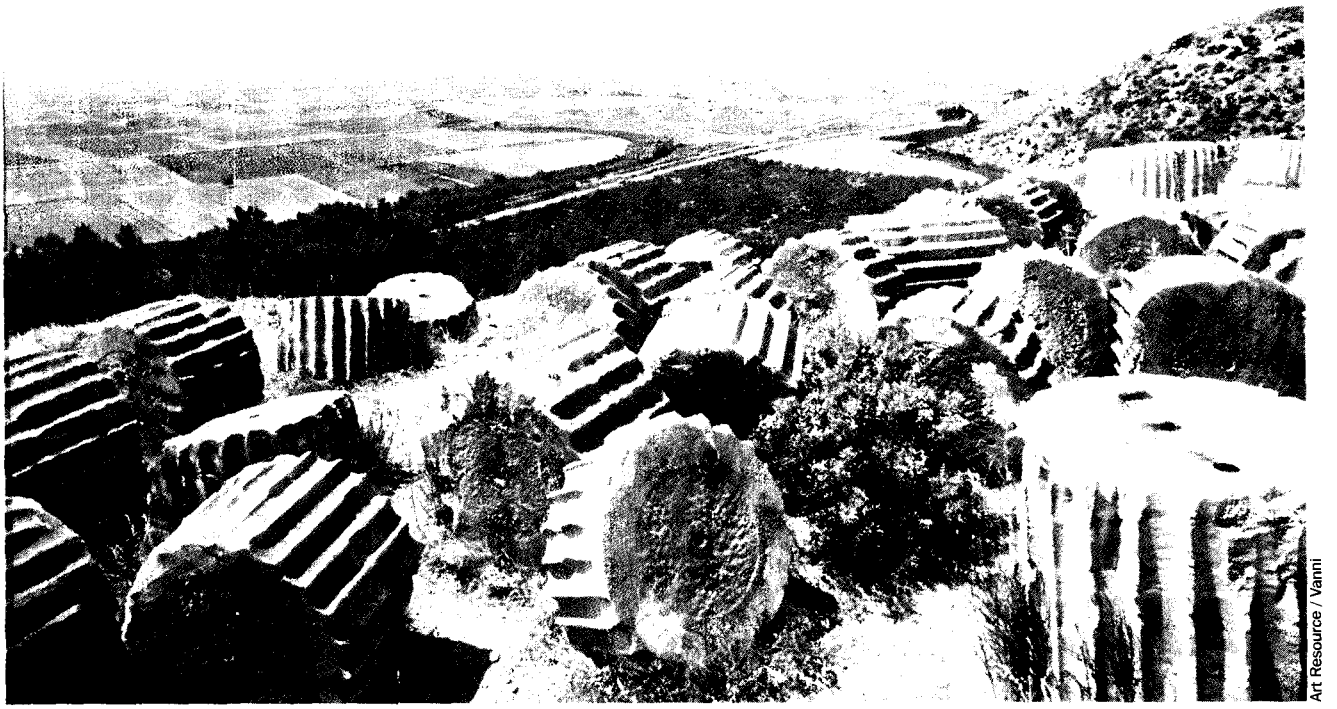

Art Resource / Vanni

Temple of Athena Polias, c. 340 B.C.

The rebels holed up in the hills during Alexander's time were caught and crucified. In modern times, rather than pursue Taliban into the tribal areas, U.S. forces let them slip away. The Alexandrian option would be to pulverize indiscriminately the villages that harbored them.

Where Alexander appears to have had hopes of subjecting Afghans *en masse* to complete domination, the United States aims primarily to annihilate terrorists. It has protected the formerly cosmopolitan character of Kabul and Herat, but it has also let unruly backwoods villages keep their medieval and reactionary interpretations of Islam. The unpacified interior, and the rough edges in the east and south, will remain rough and unpacified, so long as their inhabitants don't try to kill anyone. For an occupying army, this counts as forbearance.

And last, never before in Afghanistan's history has military technology so greatly favored the invaders. The British, an experienced colonial army, famously had their entire Kabul garrison massacred—down to the last man—on the road to Jalalabad in 1841. Such an event today is inconceivable. Ornery tribesmen in the Khyber Pass have upgraded only slightly from the ten-rupee jezails of yore, whereas in this age of computerized warfare, Americans have *screen-savers* more lethal than the deadliest weapon in the Taliban arsenal.

Holt's use of classical sources is unexceptionable, although his knowledge of modern Afghanistan relies on journalistic accounts and general texts, and not always the best ones. (A citation from Robin Moore's silly *The Hunt for Bin Laden* is a low point.) Holt refers to a Persian council as a "*loya jirga*," a Pashto phrase meaning "big meeting" that is deployed gratuitously here. The comparison of Bactrian insurgents and the Afghan mujahadeen (a category expansive enough to include Mullah Omar and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, but also Hamid Karzai and Abdul Haq) is too loose even to be wrong. These botched forays into contemporary affairs are unfortunate but by no means unforgivable in a book as eloquent and serious as this.

Its most puzzling aspect is that Holt is so willing to compare Alexander's failure in Afghanistan to the perils of the present situation, and yet he is persistently coy about the far more disturbing comparison: Iraq. Alexander's armies effortlessly sacked Iraq's Babylon and Gaugamela (Hilla and Erbil), then became hopelessly mired in Afghanistan. The United States, Holt implies, has done the reverse.

The sacking of Persepolis unseated a real enemy, but the hunt for Bessus had no purpose but to satisfy Alexander's unwillingness to let another rule, save at his dispensation. When the Bactrian campaign stretched into a years-long attempt to rule a patently unrulable wasteland, the Macedonians lost their nerve and, in time, the war. Holt makes the analogues clear: Alexander's father Philip II (a consensus builder who brought together warring city-states to fight the Persians) is George H.W. Bush, Bactria is Iraq, Bessus is Saddam Hussein, and the League of Corinth—to which Alexander appealed unsuccessfully for support in the liberation of Bactria—is the United Nations. Alexander is our sitting president.

The greatest disappointment in this otherwise satisfying book is that Holt, who teaches history at the University of Houston, stage-whispers these comparisons rather than lodging them outright. It is not fair for Holt to write of Alexander's call for "regime change" in Persia (and ultimate decision to "go it alone") without completing the argument and directly comparing Hellenistic decapitation strikes against Bessus to the more recent ones against Saddam Hussein. There is a virtue in subtlety; but here, one senses a case left unmade not out of art but timidity. On the other hand, in a scholar, there are vices worse than self-restraint. ♦

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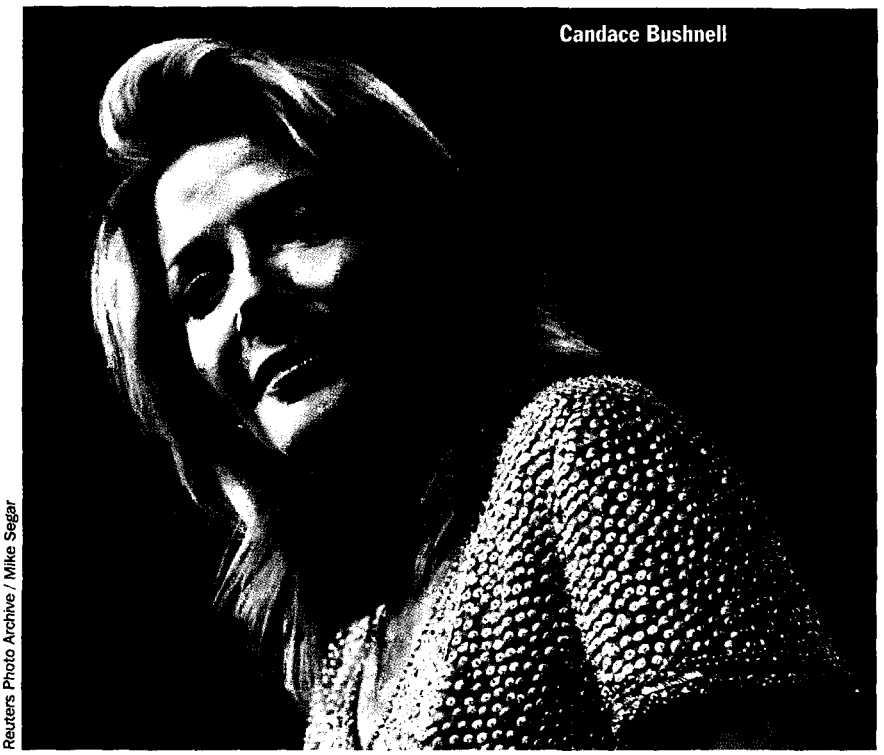
Candace Bushnell

Reuters Photo Archive / Mike Segar

Manhattan Melodrama

It's lonely at the top for these Fortysomething gals.

BY RACHEL DICARLO

In *Lipstick Jungle*, Candace Bushnell intertwines the stories of a group of women who eat lunch together a lot, talk about relationships, and are more than a little self-obsessed. The Lipstick Jungle, of course, refers to the power, money, glamour, and rivalry drifting in the Manhattan air. Sounds familiar, right? But instead of *Sex and the City*'s Carrie Bradshaw & Co., we get fortysomethings Wendy, Nico, and Victory, who are numbers 8, 12, and 17 on one newspaper's list of the 50 most powerful women in New York.

Lipstick Jungle
by Candace Bushnell
Hyperion, 353 pp., $24.95

These women don't chase Mr. Big; they *are* Mr. Big. But just because they have top jobs doesn't mean life is perfect. It's lonely at the top. Being a successful woman comes with its own set of difficulties, as Bushnell writes; and, a lot of the time, life for career gals isn't that glamorous at all.

Workaholic Wendy Healy, the president of Parador pictures, has six Oscar nominations this year, but her kids care more about getting a new pony than they do about spending time with mom. To top it off, her husband wants a divorce. When Wendy asks why, he tells her it's because she's pathetic.

Cutthroat Nico O'Neilly, editor in chief of a major glossy, is trying to bump off her boss at the megamedia conglomerate Splatch-Verner (which bears at least a few striking similarities to Condé Nast) in order to grab the coveted CEO job. At the same time, Nico is juggling her marriage, daughter, and an affair with an underwear model.

And then there's the neurotic fashion designer Victory Ford, who, after terrible reviews of her fall collection, might have to sell her brand to a big Parisian company. What's more, the women are sagging, drooping, and protruding in all the wrong places. Everything's not exactly fabulous.

But we do have all the ingredients of standard chick lit: women working in fashion, publishing, or entertainment; good men and bad men; an affair; an unmarried woman of a certain age (does she need a man to be happy?); and plenty of girl power. And, of course, everything works out for them in the end, Hollywood-style—fittingly for a book that reads like a not-altogether-veiled template for a screenplay.

The author takes it a step further, though. While the women ride around in chauffeured town cars wearing Armani suits, Baume & Mercier watches, and Jimmy Choo heels, the men in their lives are totally emasculated. Wendy's husband Shane can't get his act together to find a full-time job. Instead, he stays at home with the kids and their nanny and spends their money on spa trips, Botox, and getting the tips of his hair bleached. When he asks for a divorce, he does it in the most nonconfrontational way possible: "I want a d*vorce," he text-messages her on a cell phone.

Meanwhile, Nico's husband quit his high-paying job once she made it big so he could teach and breed puppies. "Nico loved the fact that because of her Seymour was able to pursue a meaningful yet poorly paying career," Bushnell writes. The girly men are at work, too. When a nasty man at Splatch-Verner cries after Nico fires him, the tears wash away self-tanner on his cheeks.

Victory lashes out at her eccentric but well-meaning boyfriend Lyne (not the manliest name I can think of) so often you wonder if she likes men at all. If the women in *Sex and the City* were all about finding a man, or at least

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finding as many as they could, the women in *Lipstick Jungle* prefer to ignore or humiliate the men they've got.

This all makes for highly colorful, lower-middlebrow fiction—and mostly it's just good clean fun. Plus, some of it is true. Bushnell has said that the women in *Lipstick Jungle* were inspired by women she knows in Manhattan. And it is an interesting experiment—reversing the traditional male/female power structure to create the novel's twin paradigms of the ambitious, well-educated Ms. Accomplished, and the lazy, underachieving Mr. Mom.

Yet Bushnell's formula doesn't always work. Her female protagonists, despite all their worldly success, still trot out the shibboleth of "sexism" whenever they hit a snag. Talking to her lawyer, Wendy protests the idea that her husband, who considers himself their kids' primary caregiver, will be entitled to alimony and shared custody: "What a great message for the young women of America. If you work hard and become successful, society will punish you one way or another." Well, no; that's not quite the message. It's more like: Be more careful when choosing your husband.

Bushnell's characters can be snobby and annoying, too, as when a whole scene revolves around Victory grudgingly taking the subway for the first time in years and becoming inspired for her next fashion collection by the ordinary women who ride the subway *every day*. Bushnell's feminist deconstructions of women and corporate America, which aren't worth getting into, are also a bit grating.

That said, Bushnell is by no means a dodgy writer. She's been compared to Edith Wharton and Jane Austen in the way she is able to ravage lovingly a society she knows inside and out. She packs her sentences with gorgeous turns of phrase and canny observations about people in New York. I personally missed the staccato, incomplete prose and second-person point of view that Bushnell made famous in *Sex and the City*. But, as her books always show us, you can't get everything you want. ♦

When the Bear Was King

Alabama's coach Paul Bryant knew how to win.

BY VICTOR GOLD

Contrary to what they claim down south, football was not invented in the old Confederacy. Southerners, in fact, came late to the game, and teams from Dixie were considered inferior to those of other regions until the Rose Bowl of 1926, when an underdog eleven from Alabama, featuring future cowboy star Johnny Mack Brown, upset the top-ranked Washington Huskies, 20-19.

Nine years later, another Alabama team, this one featuring All-American end Don Hutson, and a hard-nosed country boy called "Bear," returned to Pasadena to defeat a favored Stanford squad, 29-13. Hutson would later gain fame as a record-breaking pass receiver for the Green Bay Packers, while his teammate would go on to become, as the dust jacket of Allen Barra's *The Last Coach* tells us, "the greatest football coach in history."

The Last Coach
A Life of Paul "Bear" Bryant
by Allen Barra
Norton, 545 pp., $26.95

An arguable claim outside the state of Alabama, but what claim isn't arguable in an age of sports talk radio? This much we know, however: At the time he died (1983), no college football coach in history had won more games (323, including six national championships) than Paul "Bear" Bryant, and two decades after his passing, no coach, college or professional, has inspired more biographies.

This is no less than the fifth biography of the fabled Alabama football mentor, and that only begins to tell the story. There is also Bryant's personal memoir, *Bear*—unique among that genre, thanks to John Underwood's pitch-perfect rendition of the coach's rustic voice—along with a score of Alabama football books hinged on the Bryant persona, from Winston Groom's *The Crimson Tide* to Eli Gold's (no relation) more recent *Crimson Nation*.

Which is not to say the subject matter is exhausted; only that the sportswriter who undertakes another book about Bear Bryant would do well to come up with an original theme. For Jim Dent's *The Junction Boys*, it was the capsule story of the hellacious summer camp Bryant held to weed out "those who don't want to play" in his first year at Texas A&M; for Tom Stoddard's *Turnaround* it was coverage of a single season at Alabama and what one reviewer called "an exploration into the complicated psyche of 'Bear' Bryant."

Barra, a native Alabamian who grew up immersed in Bryant lore, works with a broader brush. He sees Bryant as a transitional figure on the American sports scene, the last of a line that coached college football as the ultimate game, not simply a bridge to the National Football League.

"When Bear Bryant began his career, the NFL wasn't even a tail to the dog; college football was the whole dog," writes Barra. "Bryant's intention was to field winning football teams, not train players for the professionals."

A seeming contradiction there since, intentionally or not, Bryant earned a reputation as the Saturday breeder of Sunday stars Joe Namath, Ken Stabler, Lee Roy Jordan, and Ozzie Newsome. But as Barra makes clear, contradiction lies at the heart of

Victor Gold, a graduate of the University of Alabama, is national correspondent for Washingtonian *magazine.*

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the Bryant mystique: A hard-drinking, heavy-smoking blasphemer, the Bear nonetheless remained a folk hero in the Bible Belt; a man who prized winning above all things earthly, he could summarily dismiss Joe Namath before a major game on learning that Namath, his star quarterback, had broken team rules. (Alabama won the game with a second-string quarterback on four field goals, delivering the message Bryant intended. A chastened Namath rejoined the team the following season.)

The contradictions abound. Bryant by reputation was a brutal taskmaster, so intent on winning football games that he drove his charges to a point where, at Junction, Texas, in 1954 (105-degree heat, no shade, no water during practice), their lives seemed at risk. Yet few coaches enjoyed the lifelong relationship the Bear forged with players in his 37-year career at Maryland, Kentucky, Texas A&M, and Alabama. At his funeral, Barra reports, "The procession ran three miles long and included six buses loaded with current and former players and staff members.

"Some journalists compared it to the slow train cortege that carried Franklin Roosevelt's body from Warm Springs, Georgia, to Washington in 1945," writes Barra. "Viewers across the nation turned on their nightly news to an astonishing sight: All along the 55-mile route [from Tuscaloosa to Elmwood cemetery in Birmingham] an estimated quarter of a million people lined the highways and crowded onto overpasses to view the procession. . . . The overwhelming majority had never attended college, let alone the University of Alabama."

The coach as icon. A southern regional quirk? Not at all. Barra quotes the *New Yorker*'s "Talk of the Town" column two weeks after Bryant's death: "When I heard on the radio that he had died, and I started to cry," wrote Ian Frazier, "I knew I was just part of a big chorus."

How to explain the aura that set Bryant apart from other coaches who, Saturday afternoon fever aside, were engaged in what, after all, is merely a boys' game? The Bear himself sometimes wondered. Though Bryant enjoyed the limelight, his hardscrabble origins as the son of a dirt-poor farmer in Moro Bottom, Arkansas, was never far from his thoughts. Barra recounts the story of Bryant wearing a new T-shirt at a Sugar Bowl victory party in New Orleans. When one of the guests pointed out that his shirt had a hole in it, Bryant replied, "Yeah, I know. I always tear a small hole in my T-shirts so I'll never forget where I came from."

Zuma Press / Malcom Emmons

Bear Bryant

A star on his high-school football team, Bear—he got the nickname at age 12 wrestling a circus bear for a dollar a minute—was recruited by Alabama and, like other poor country boys of the Depression era, seized the opportunity to trade muddy coveralls for a clean football jersey. It was a background that helped Bryant-the-coach relate to other poor country boys, both white and black, in later years.

At six-three, 200 pounds, with piercing blue eyes and a voice like slow rolling thunder, Bryant was a presence so awesome that one of his Kentucky recruits, George Blanda, signed up thinking, "That's what God must look like." (A later recruit, Alabama's Ken Stabler, had visions of "a face on Mount Rushmore.")

For all that, Bryant knew the only impression that mattered for a major college football coach had to do with numbers on a scoreboard. "Winning isn't everything," he would say, "but it sure beats anything that comes in second."

Not exactly an original insight, though in Bryant's case it wasn't winning alone that created the aura but the way he did it. There are two kinds of players you can win with, he would tell young coaches: those that are good and know they're good, and those that are good but don't know it. The Bear had his share of the former, but what got him out of bed at 5:30 each fall morning was the challenge posed in motivating the latter—getting under-achievers to realize their potential, turning losers into winners.

Bryant teams, from Maryland in the 1940s to Alabama in the '70s, were best characterized by the phrase made famous by Jake Gaither of Florida A&M. He wanted players, said Gaither, who were "a-gile, mo-bile, and hos-tile." Bryant's players were all these, but more, they were drilled to think in terms of what their coach called "oneness," playing for your team, not yourself. God help the Alabama linebacker who danced after a tackle, or the halfback who did anything but hand the ball to the referee after crossing the goal line.

"We don't build character," Bryant told an inquiring reporter who asked about his recruiting philosophy. "Our players have character when they get here."

Barra captures all this, the man and the legend, in what, by all odds, should be the last word on the life and times of Paul "Bear" Bryant—though personally, all things considered, I think there are books yet to come about a Deep South football coach whose passing could bring tears to the eyes of a *New Yorker* writer. ♦

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"This is the best reading group I've ever belonged to."

Books in Brief

***The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion (Knopf, 227 pp., $23.95).** I know, it seems downright cruel to fault a book written by a woman who lost a husband after more than forty years of marriage while their daughter, in and out of hospitals, died almost 20 months to the day after her father. Obviously this is a time to try any soul most bitterly.

Joan Didion has some twelve works—fiction and nonfiction—to her credit. Perhaps it was all too understandable for her as a writer to want to try to make some—any—sense at all out of the "weeks and then months that cut loose any fixed idea I ever had about death, about illness . . . about marriage and children and memory . . . about the shallowness of sanity, about life itself."

But actually how much do we learn of life, illness, death, marriage, or memory from this book that one sincerely hopes brought at least some measure of therapeutic ease to its author? I read it with considerable interest, having not that long ago entered the unhappy state of widowhood myself after more than fifty-three years of marriage. Yes, as Didion notes, you are constantly replaying bits, pieces, scenes from memories you had thought long forgotten. Your mind is never still.

My husband Richard and I had met Didion and her husband John Gregory Dunne way back in the early eighties. Richard wound up talking with Didion through the meal as she told him in great detail of her great-grandparents, who had made the arduous trip across the desert to settle in California. Off and on over the years he would recall that conversation, always admiring her for her pride in the grit it had taken her family to make that perilous journey.

Didion continually recollects bits, pieces, snatches, scenes of a past formed by joined lives as the days go by. But her telling perhaps is still too raw to bring any real meaning or insight to such an experience. One of the things I found disturbing, or at the very least curious, in her book was how in attempting to come to terms with her grief she glides over the whole question of, well, the afterlife.

She talks of having a priest come to the hospital after Dunne had died, and having both a Catholic and an Episcopal priest officiate at Dunne's funeral services at St. John the Divine in New York, but that's about it as far as any role religion seems to have played in their lives. She devotes rather more space to what Emily Post had to say back in a 1922 edition of her book on etiquette about comforting the grieving individual, offering "a little hot tea or broth."

She does talk of not wanting to give away Dunne's shoes, since "he would need shoes if he was to return." She says at a later point, "I did not believe in the resurrection of the body but I still believed that given the right circumstances he would come back." This is part, I suppose, of the eponymous magical thinking that went on in her year of grief.

In talking over Didion's book in recent days with two fellow widows, long married to brilliant and talented men, none of us felt she had come anywhere near expressing our own thoughts on the experience. And one woman, who had lost one of the finest minds of his generation, said what she missed every day, every night, was "the conversation." The other two of us exclaimed, virtually wailed, "Yes, that's exactly it. The conversation." Our men had been great talkers. The intertwining of ideas, judgments, memories—the very texture of our lives for decades—were now irretrievably cut off from us. We keep on inevitably, but we know we're so much the poorer for the time that remains.

Didion closes her book leaving us with the thought, "if we are to live our lives there comes a point at which we must relinquish the dead, let them go, keep them dead." I don't agree. The dead—our special dead—keep living as long as we do. Yes, conversation is no longer present, a sad factor, but the spirit lives as long as we do.

Now, for Didion, she has the sad mission of writing another book mourning the death of her daughter. You can only pity the small, pitiful waif of a persona she presents to us, doggedly going on about her book tour.

—Cynthia Grenier

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"Top White House aides are privately discussing the future of Karl Rove, with some expressing doubt that President Bush can move beyond the damaging CIA leak case as long as his closest political strategist remains in the administration." —The Washington Post

Parody

Card, Rove Out; Gergen New Chief

Bartlett, McClellan, Hadley, Also Step Down; Barney Next?

By Edward T. Folliard
Washington Post Staff Writer

In a dramatic development that caught political Washington by surprise last night, an embattled President Bush, whose popularity with the American people is at an all-time low, accepted the resignations of controversial White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card and divisive Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove. Communications Director Dan Bartlett, Texas-born Press Secretary Scott McClellan, and National Security Council chief Stephen Hadley also stepped down.

This development was seen by historians and political scientists as a desperate, last-minute attempt to resuscitate a presidency that is widely believed to have done inestimable damage to the social fabric of the United States. At a tense briefing at 9 p.m. in the White House press room, a visibly shaken Mr. Bush said that he had "accepted the resignations [of Card and Rove] after extended discussions," and in a separate statement, declared that he was "pleased to announce that David Gergen has accepted my invitation to serve our country and is already on duty here at the White House."

Reaction to these stunning developments was swift. Political strategists were quick to praise the affable and experienced Gergen as a "national treasure" who would bring "competence, credibility, and wisdom" to a failing administration. Retired CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite, who has been accurately described as "the most trusted man in America," told an audience in Manhattan that Gergen "has served in every administration since Richard Nixon's."

David Gergen: tonic for the nation.

Many longtime observers blamed Card and Rove for an "atmosphere of bitterness" in the nation's capital, and for promoting "negativity, dirty tricks, and the politics of personal destruction."

"Dave Gergen will bring us together," said one former official with close ties to many distinguished public servants. Bipartisan observers on Capitol Hill agreed that, as long as Card and Rove, both favorites of the pro-gun, anti-abortion Religious Right, remained at the White House, "the Bush administration could only fall deeper into this quagmire of its own making . . . [and that] only [someone like David] Gergen could restore America's fractured relationships with our allies," as well as with respected Democratic leaders such as Sen. Harry Reid, the soft-spoken minority leader from Nevada, and feisty, pioneering Rep. Nancy Pelosi, leader of the House Democrats.

"I would guess that Bush did this because he had no choice," said eloquent Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú, reached at her home in Guatemala City. "Or his daddy told him to. But at least the extreme right is no longer in charge up there."

As evidence of this, lifelong Republican Ralph Neas, president of People for the American Way, told the Post that he expects a chastened Mr. Bush "to wipe the slate clean by withdrawing [Supreme Court nominee Samuel] Alito's name and consulting with me and ordinary working Americans to bring some fairness and balance to the federal courts." (see Editorial, page A26.)

Neas was interviewed at an impromptu gathering at a popular Washington restaurant where enlightened businessman and former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, civil rights legend and presidential candidate Rev. Al Sharpton, Jane Alexander—often called the First Lady of the American Stage—and one-time White House press secretary and award-winning journalist Bill Moyers quietly cele-

See Gergen, A5, Col.1

For 'Old Hand' Gergen, Just Another Day at the Office

By Janet Cooke
Washington Post Staff Writer

As if to emphasize that a new hand was wielding the White House broom, Chief of Staff David Gergen walked up to the presidential lectern in the Press Room a few minutes before sunrise. As reporters could tell from his rumpled shirt and darkened eyes, the veteran public servant had been up all night with trusted associates in a marathon [illegible] damage assessment and official [illegible] well as planning, consulting, [illegible] and governing from the center.

In a breathtaking series of initiatives, beginning with the dismissal of the entire White House communications and national security staff, he announced that the Bush administration had learned from its mistakes, for the most part, and was "humbly asking the American people for forgiveness."

First, he declared, Mr. Bush would meet this afternoon with impassioned antiwar protester Cindy Sheehan, whose son was killed in needless combat in Iraq. Ms. Sheehan, who has been demanding a meeting with the President since last summer, has not yet responded to this long-overdue gesture.

Second, Mr. Bush would be "reaching out" in the next few days to former President Jimmy Carter for "guidance in restoring our country's good name." Mr. Gergen said that it had not been decided whether Mr. Carter, winner of the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize, would head a special blue-ribbon panel or actually join the administration as a resident "moral consultant ... But tough times call for a gentle man, and there is no greater, or gentler, or more widely respected, former president than Jimmy Carter," Gergen said.

"We can't turn the clock back to 1979," added Gergen, "but drawing on President Carter's inspiration is the next best thing."

Already the White House drawing boards are loaded down with plans for targeted tax increases, a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq, federal health insurance, a special fund for infrastructure maintenance, a Marshall Plan for America's inner cities, handgun con-

See Analysis, A6, Col.1

the weekly Standard
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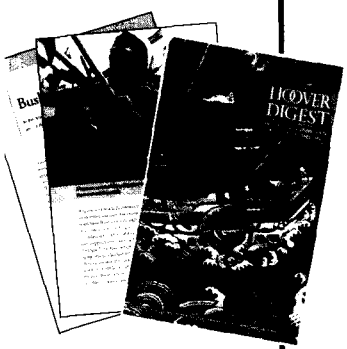

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In the new issu

All Deliberate Speed?

The Supreme Court's Brown v. Board of education ruling in 1954 was supposed to improve educational opportunities for minorities. It has not. Ways to reduce the racial chasm between minority and nonminority schools are as great now as it was then.
By Clint Bolick

It seems that, in the 50 years since *Brown*, we have tried almost everything to equalize opportunities: from forced busing to increased spending to reduced class sizes to all manner of educational fads. Nothing has worked until now.

The bright light on the horizon is school choice, in which children from low-income families or in failing public schools can enroll in private schools at public expense. The results from programs in Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Florida suggest that **school choice offers the greatest hope for reducing the racial academic gap**.

School choice offers an educational life preserver, allowing children to leave good schools for better ones. One thing that minority parents, especially economically disadvantaged minority parents, have always lacked is the power to choose the best schools for their children. More-affluent parents have always had that power, which they exercise either by buying homes in areas with good public schools or by sending their children to private schools.

School choice helps level the playing field. It gives low-income families greater power over their children's education. The power to exit poor-performing schools, even if is not always exercised, forces the schools to improve and to focus not on satisfying politicians and special interest groups but on satisfying parents.

The results so far are obvious and impressive. But **massive resistance to school choice today is no less potent and reactionary than massive resistance to desegregation was 50 years ago**. Special interest groups that have a powerful interest in preserving the status quo thwart school choice at every legislative turn and then threaten to undo it in the courts when their efforts fail in the political arena.

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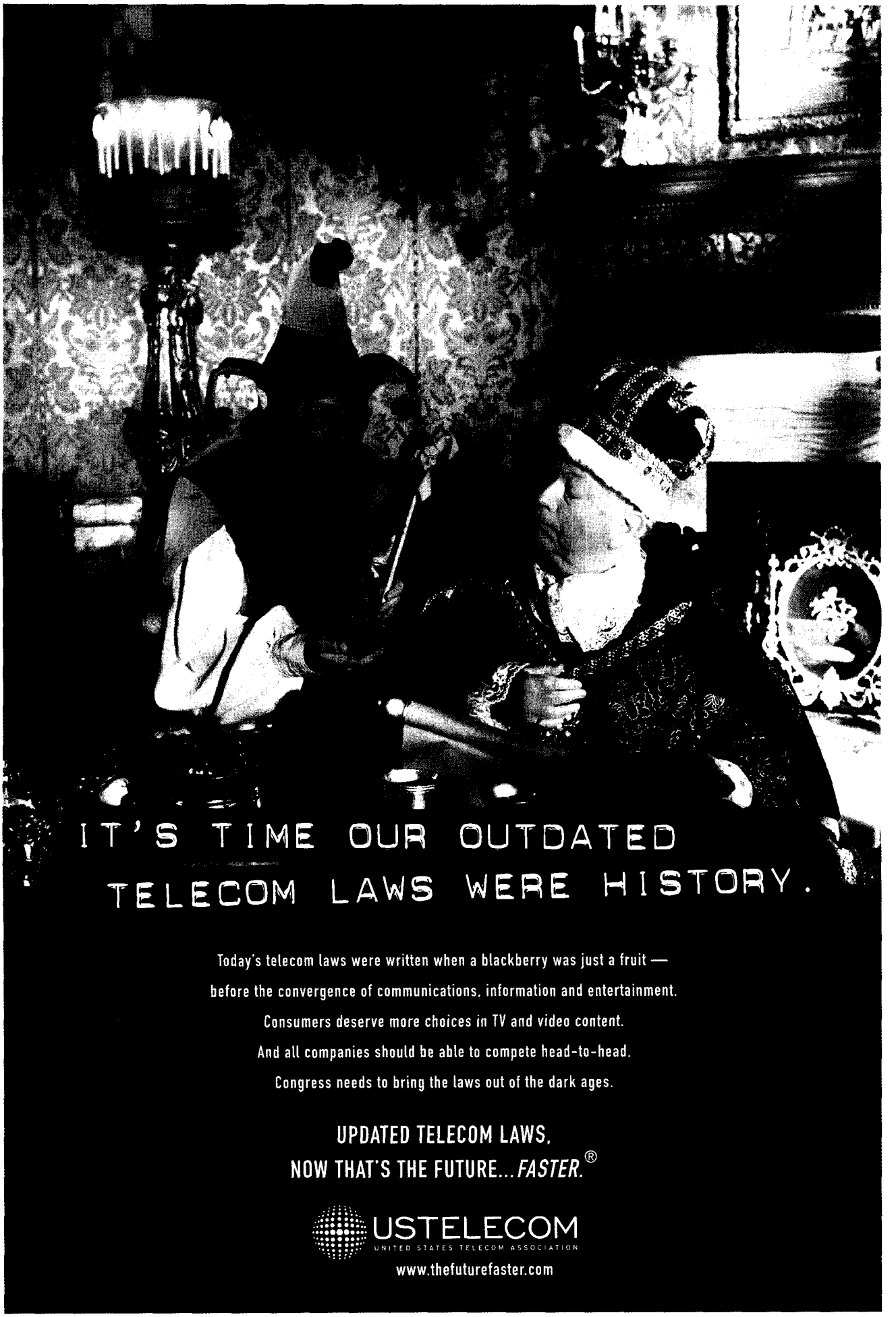

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